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FAMILY FAILINGS.

137
A NOVEL,

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

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FAMILY FAILINGS.

CHAPTER I.

HORACE LEIGH and Stephen Forrester sat together once again—as old, familiar friends.

Horace had so long and bitterly regretted their quarrel, that when Stephen held out his hand in forgiveness of the past, that of his friend was ready and glad to meet it.

“We will look to the future, Horace,” said the aggrieved; “and forget the past.”

“If *you* forget, *I* must remember *I* was wrong,” said the aggressor.

And they involuntarily wrung one another's hands again.

“ We have been guilty of folly—we have lost much happiness,—we must make up for lost time,” said Stephen Forrester.

“ I have never wanted a true friend, so much as—now,” said Horace ; “ I will tell you some day my history—I have had bitter days, since we met last.”

“ Troubles and griefs, when shared, are lighter than before,” answered his friend ; “ you may trust me. I have so felt for what I know you suffered—I have never found a friend, since I lost you.”

“ You shall hear all,” said Horace ; “ but not yet,—not yet !”

They were too full of agitating thoughts, those two, to have many words.

And then they spoke of less personal things, more worldly matters, and there was a deep, cutting sarcasm in all the observations of Horace Leigh, on men and women too, which struck his friend ; and he remarked upon it.

{ “ Bitter days,” said Horace Leigh ;
“ leave bitter thoughts, as legacies.”

There was a pause, and Stephen occupied himself in gazing on the fine, but altered countenance of the lost friend he had regained.

The features were not changed, but the expression was, of the frank look of the young man little remained, for there was a shade of suffering, Stephen little thought how recent, on the whole face ; and its now predominant expression, was one which had become habitual---that of mental power ; in the deep seated eyes, the broad firm mouth, were plainly to be read, the fully exercised powers of intellect, the upright principles which guided them, and the deep sorrow---clouding both.

The feelings of his early youth, the warm sympathies of those days, returned to the travelled man of the world ; friendship is a strong tie to those who have never loved, and Stephen Forrester fairly yearned to be a comfort to his suffering friend.

“ What an elegant creature Miss Trevor

has become," said he to Horace, "I envy you your happiness."

"Do you?" said Horace.

"In having such a cousin," concluded Stephen.

"After the dark and flashing eyes of Italy, the harsh coloring and animated gestures, there is something in the tall, slight figure, the delicate and feminine appearance of Miss Trevor, very fascinating to me; and that soft, sad manner---for she seemed very sad---has all the effect of moonlight after the glare and glitter of a lighted ball-room. I have never seen any one I admire so much, and yet she is not beautiful."

"And she looked sad?" asked Horace Leigh.

"I never saw any one look more so, Horace --- except yourself," added his friend.

"Ha!" replied Horace, drawing a long breath.

"I shall meet you to-morrow at dinner, of course," said Mr. Forrester.

“Where?” enquired Horace, looking up hastily.

“At the Trevor’s,” replied Stephen.

“*There*,” answered Horace, in a low tone; “Well, I must go!”

The dinner hour came upon the following day. Horace was late, all were assembled but himself.

“You will be grieved to hear Blanche is so ill, she cannot leave her room; so ill ever since yesterday,” said Mrs. Trevor.

“I must spend the evening with her,” said Grace.

“Ah, I forgot,” continued Mrs. Trevor; “it is so long since you have met—Miss Forrester—my nephew, Horace Leigh.”

Stephen Forrester talked well; there were traces in all he said of an elegant and cultivated mind, but there was more real cleverness in any one of the brilliant touches Grace would sometimes add to what he related, than in all his well turned sentences.

There was a vigour and a truth in her short but picturesque accounts, a quaint and

laughing wisdom in the conclusions she had formed, which at any other time would have greatly interested Horace, but his mind and feelings were so completely absorbed by Blanche and Stephen that he scarcely listened to Grace Forrester.

“ I don’t believe my place is more than two miles from High Elms,” said Stephen; “ but I forget these things, I am a stranger here, in England—I certainly have not performed my duty, as a squire, but I am going now to devote myself to my acres---whether that ignorant devotion will be of any use to *them* is doubtful to the last degree, but *nous verrons* ! I have lived a wanderer, I mean to die a *squire* ; it doesn’t sound well, does it Grace, after our soft Italian ; but one cannot be romantic all one’s days : henceforth I shall be practical, friend Horace---if I can ! ”

“ Those who own the soil have indeed duties to the tillers of the ground, beyond those of men in general,” said Mr. Trevor in his sententious way.

“ Italy, with its arts and its idleness, is a

bad school for politics and poor laws," said Stephen laughingly, shaking his head; "I have so much to learn I don't think I shall ever begin! my little sister Grace, must learn them for me, and I---must pick up the crumbs. She likes such things--duties and responsibilities. and all that sort of thing, are quite familiar words to her."

"Stephen!" said Grace reprovingly, but with a lovely smile and blush.

"I rather dread the dullness of our English home after the sunny skies and happy days of Italy," continued Forrester; "who will there be to break my *tête-à-tête* with Grace, shall we have any neighbours, Horace?"

"It is the gayest neighbourhood I know," said Horace Leigh, "every one has a daughter just come out! Miss Forrester will find no dearth of young companions---such as they are!"

"Is Luke altered by his position?"

"You must judge for yourself," replied Horace unwilling to be drawn into a des-

description of his brother, "but Miss Forrester, I ask your friendship for his wife, poor Emily! she needs a friend."

"Daughters in every house," said Stephen, "how alarming! are there no sons? Is Chedholm sold?"

"Yes, it was purchased by the richest commoner in England, Mr. Green, *the* Mr. Green; why he should buy that place *has* been a mystery to me," said Horace Leigh.

"What is he like?" asked Stephen.

"A very fine looking fellow, if he could but forget it," answered Horace Leigh, who had a great dislike to the young millionaire, "I always had an instinctive dread that he would some day do me an injury," continued he, turning towards Grace, and meeting her sunny eyes. "Has it ever happened to you to feel a similar presentiment, and did it ever fail to prove its truth---in time?"

"Never!" replied the lady, who fully entered into his meaning, "I *never* failed to find the person who gave me such a feeling, however unknown to me then, become in

time the source of unexpected good or evil."

"Absurd!" said Stephen.

"Unfailing nevertheless," concluded Horace.

Grace and Horace, who each of them united in their own minds to a remarkable degree the two gifts of imagination and practical good sense, which are generally found *apart*, were drawn together more by the few words that passed, than they would have been by hours of general conversation.

"I conclude it is to you that I must turn for an unprejudiced account of Mr. Green as he is an acquaintance also of yours," said Stephen.

"A favorite would be a better word," said Mrs. Trevor coloring, and making such a full stop that Stephen asked no more.

"And Horace, do you often go to High Elms?" enquired he after a pause.

"No," replied Horace firmly, "my ways and Luke's are not the same; I am a solitary creature—now; and at the only time I can get down, their house is full of gayer guests than I can be; but one of Mrs. Vernon's old

servants, now a widow, has a quaint old house outside the village, and I have my bachelor apartments there ; dining at High Elms is enough for me...I have my work, even in the holidays."

"So you have holidays!" said Stephen smiling.

"Because he works," interrupted Grace.

"A dreadful cut at me!" said Stephen, "I do believe if she were in my place she would overwork herself into an early grave ; she has energy enough *for two* ; lucky is it for me she has ; Grace is my man of business!"

"Stephen!" said Grace reproachfully.

And so they chatted on, that party of old friends ; in all the happiness of reconciliation. No one was there to interrupt the flow of personal remark and conversation ; they wanted no one but poor Blanche, and she was extended on her sofa up stairs, with a new book, unread ; there was an open letter too—upon the table by her side, and that she hastily concealed upon the sound of a footstep near at hand.

She had been weeping ; for the light in which it pleased her cousin Horace Leigh to look upon her marriage was painful and unexpected.

“ Could any love equal the friendship of a heart like his ? ”

She almost doubted ! for that tie of near and dear relationship, that life-long and deep affection had wound itself for years about her whole existence ; and this new love was still *so new* to her !

To answer that strange question she had read and re-read the letter from her affianced husband ; and then to her own heart she owned, she had no right to be unhappy, even if Horace was.

The step was that of Grace ; more brilliant and more beautiful than ever, with diminished haughtiness and more refined fascination of manner ; with the exquisite polish of foreign society, bringing out the solid excellences of her English education : there could not be a more attractive creature to those who...were not afraid of her !

The sarcastic smile was never now allowed to show itself; the pride was in her heart, for it had found much to foster it since last she passed her days with Blanche, but from her manner it was gone; and when she entered, with her long, dark, chesnut curls sweeping her brilliant cheeks, and bent her perfect figure down, laying her graceful head on the sofa close to her suffering friend, smiling with all the girlish affection that she felt; Blanche actually wondered at the loveliness of Grace...she had never seen it equalled.

“What a happiness it is to see you once again,” said she, taking a low seat, and speaking in a caressing way; “I am so glad to be amongst you all again, though I *have* lost my heart.”

“Indeed...already?” laughingly said Blanche.

“Only too true,” said Grace, looking at Blanche with her magnificent eyes full of *espieglerie*; “how you could ever see so much of that interesting, clever, melancholy

Mr. Leigh and never care for him is wonderful!"

"Not wonderful...he never cared for me," said Blanche.

"Then you have quarrelled!" answered Grace, "there is a *je ne sais quoi*, I'm sure!"

"Perhaps we have!" replied poor Blanche .. "who knows?"

"And Mr. Leigh? is he as unlike his brother as he used to be?"

"Luke is a wretch!" said Blanche; "but perhaps now he will be more amiable; his wish is gratified...he has a son and heir, to all that should have gone to Horace. I feel so sorry."

"So do I!" said Grace.

"If any thing could make one wicked and spiteful, I grieve to be obliged to use such language, Grace, it would be a companionship with Luke. I do not wonder, Emily..."

She paused; Grace would not ask, but she resolved to watch.

Presently Blanche spoke again.

“ Grace, dear, I have a secret for you. You will be surprised...but I am...engaged.”

“ You never once gave me a hint,” said Grace, reproachfully.

“ Had you been here you would have known, for it is nothing new ; if I have not been won before, it was not for lack of wooing.”

“ Is he worthy of you, Blanche ? I think it scarcely possible.”

“ Wait till you see him, or rather wait till you know him well ; I am quite a lecturer you know...I never lecture *him*. I don't look up much in this world, Grace, but I look up to *him*.”

“ Do you indeed ?” said Grace, showing a very innocent astonishment at Blanche's thinking so much of any one.

“ Such a delightful person must be poor,” concluded Grace ; “ they always are ! Don't marry a poor man, dear Blanche.”

“ Alas ! I shall not have that merit or that trial,” laughingly replied her friend.

“ The only thing against him is his wealth ...he is a millionaire...richer than ever since his cousin’s death.”

“ I’m glad of that,” answered Grace Forrester ; “ of all the miserable things it must be marrying a poor man, unless you have enough for two...as I have ! But his name, dear Blanche ? You said he lived down in our neighbourhood ?”

“ He bought a place there, merely to be near us during the time we always spend at High Elms ; but don’t be shocked, dear Grace...perfect as I think he is...his name is Green...Willoughby Green !”

CHAPTER II.

IN one of the courts of law, the judge has been, for a considerable time, giving the whole attention of his vigorous mind to the merits of a complicated case. The arguments have been heard with patience and weighed with care. He is evidently about to decide the case in favour of the plaintiff.

But a young barrister upon the opposite side arose and was about to speak, when he was silenced by the judge.

“ There is nothing more to be said ; I have made up my mind.”

“ I think, my Lord,” replied the young advocate, with a frank and noble manner, “ that I have *that* to explain which may show the case in a new light.”

“ Nothing would alter my opinion,” said the judge, “ the case is now as clear as day to me.”

“ If I might be allowed to speak,” again asserted the young barrister.

“ I will hear nothing more,” replied the judge, greatly annoyed at his pertinacity.

The young man’s manner changed from all its pleasant frankness to that of a stern and determined will ; his voice had much of bitterness as he enquired :

“ I believe, my Lord, if I have not *permission*, I have at least the *right* to speak, I stand upon my *right*.”

The judge listened to this terse sentence with a sharp look, and waving him to go on, replied :

“ Oh, if you stand upon your right, I *must* hear what you have to say ; but it will be useless, my mind is made up.”

And in a speech as clear and cutting as a Damascus blade, did the young but not altogether unknown barrister put forth his views—making doubtful all that had seemed clear, and making clear, what had not been ever seen before—perfect in diction, keen in discovering the truth, unanswerable in law, the young advocate's views struck the judge with astonishment ; his head bent down, his sharp eyes fixed upon the speaker, he gave his full attention, and when the pleader ceased—a look of unqualified approbation stole over the face of one of the most upright and learned judges of his day.

The barrister remarked the look, and confident as he felt in the justice and truth of all that he had said, he felt, nevertheless, it might be thrown away, on one who had made up his mind.

“ You have done well to insist on being heard, I will take farther time for consideration, and give my judgment some days hence,” declared the judge.

The face of the young speaker flushed

crimson at this tribute to his powers of argument, as he bowed low and took his seat.

The case excited so much curiosity amongst those who chanced to be present, that few of them were absent on the day when the judge was to give his final decision.

It was with some agitation that Horace heard these flattering words:

“ I have re-considered the case, and I have altered my opinion,” said the judge, and then at great length, and with many compliments to the successful young barrister, he gave his decision in favour of the *Defendant* !

“ A righteous judge, a Daniel come to judgment !” said Stephen Forrester, in the pride and exultation of his heart to his next neighbour, “ it was a noble act to own that he was wrong !”

“ Who is that young gentleman ?” enquired a shrewd attorney of another. “ Whoever he is, his fortune for life is made.”

“His name,” replied his old friend Mr. Toulmin, “is Mr. Leigh.”

Congratulations were showered upon Horace after this, and more than mere congratulations...briefs.

He had a Name!

The purse of Fortunatus ever full is often believed to be a fable, but it is a reality, a fact—ever filling and ever full, the man who has it, let him be what he may...be his profession what it will, is always rich; let him but have that purse, he *must* be rich... only in these days it is no longer tangible, it is not now a purse, it is a *Name*.

“Accept my warm congratulations,” said Mr. Toulmin, who had called on business a few days after the verdict of the Judge.

He came for an opinion on a matter which had been going on working and fermenting without any result as yet.

“Ah!” answered Horace Leigh, “*this* business will not end so favorably as the last; I have nothing in this to work upon; the

gaps in the papers will be fatal to our cause —what answers from abroad.”

“From Sir Josiah nothing new, but Mr. Simmons has again declared that he knows nothing of the letters that we want.”

“I would do much to serve Sir Josiah Walgrave,” said Horace musingly, “but what can we do without them? it *must* go against us.”

“As to Mr. Simmons,” said the shrewd attorney, “I believe he has been more sinned against than sinning. I think I have a clue, but more of that some other day.

And he placed before Horace Leigh, in a somewhat new aspect, the old affair of the partnership of Sir Josiah with the enthusiast ...the liabilities of the scientific baronet were not yet confirmed or settled.

Law has its delays and in this case they were lengthened by many untoward circumstances.

And so, Sir Josiah was still abroad living in comfort, if not in luxury, and Mr. Simmons whose resources were dwindling fast away,

was wandering restlessly and living...as he could; and since he left England all communications to him had gone through the hands of a third person, for no one but his lawyer ever knew where he was; his fortunes and his heart were breaking fast; but it was not a little curious that his affairs in some degree, and Sir Josiah's interests to a still greater extent, should have been confided to the professional skill of Horace Leigh! their causes must come on before long, and in the courts, he was to be one of their advocates.

The morning after this interview, Horace, who was expecting Mr. and Mrs. Keane to arrive in England shortly, received from Fred one of his lucid and elegant epistles.

“DEAR HORACE,

“We were going to start immediately for London, but since I have *proposed* Isabelle has *disposed* of me and herself, not a bad one that is it now. We have been what I call hotelling it till I am quite tired, and between ourselves it is very expensive

work, so much so, that when I am to pay you the two hundred pounds you lent us for our wedding trip, like a good natured fellow as you are, I don't know, but I'll borrow it of some one else when I come to England and pay you...not a bad idea, because one might go on so, for ever; without ever paying the last one it would be a profitable speculation; better than some of my excellent but not over wise father-in-law's. We are going to Paris to stay with him, and somehow or other Isabelle likes being abroad, and though I don't—that doesn't appear to signify to anybody—don't get married, take my advice ...it is such a trouble! Nevertheless I wonder you don't marry Miss Trevor; I should if I had been you long ago, and Isabelle always thought you were engaged! she wouldn't be too clever for *you*. Well, good bye Horatio, I am just going out to walk with my wife, rather slow work as there are always half-a-dozen fellows with moustaches talking to her, and I can't go away and talk to other ladies because she is afraid to be

left and so till we do come back to the old haunts, I remain,

“Yours most truly,
FRED KEANE.”

Baden-Baden.

Fred does not improve in wisdom! thought Horace as he read this effusion, through which he saw enough to guess that Fred was not the happy man he ought to be; but Horace did not see that the real reason why Isabelle had delayed their return to England was, that she could not bear to have to *face him in his debt*!---it was too great and bitter a humiliation to be encountered, situated as they were, and had once been!

Though Horace Leigh was becoming too much absorbed in a new love, to remember the old one, except as a dream, it was nevertheless a great relief to him that they were not yet coming to Town.

By the same post Horace received, from Luke, an invitation, written in the exultation of his heart, asking him down to High

Elms, for the christening of his young son and heir;—they were to have grand doings, and he and Emily in particular were quite delighted with the Forresters. Horace of course, busy or not, must come.

Mrs. Hannah White, a few months after Mrs. Vernon's lamented death, with some little doubt as to whether she was not very foolish, had taken Mr. Stock, the devoted butler, for better *and* worse.

The festivities, on the occasion, had been on a scale quite unprecedented at the small house in Islington, and a good many of the dainties were made by the fair hands of the bride herself.

"I think I had better be busy, then I shan't fret, for when one has saved money it isn't pleasant to have it put on a speculation like this Inn, we're going to!" said the respectable and excellent Mrs. White to Sophy, who was her principal confidante.

"Those married ones, have no sympathy with *us*," said the spinster aunt, to her

young niece, forgetting the thirty odd years difference in their ages.

"It's my opinion my dear," continued Mrs. White, "that if people don't marry young, they oughtn't to at all, it don't do to have to obey, when you have always had your own way; I don't like being Missis of an Inn, though it is down at High Elms; and if it wasn't for thinking of how it will worrit Mr. Luke, to have some of his company's horses a coming to us, for there is no where else to go, I think I should give up Stock at once."

"My dear aunt," said Sophy; "if you think all this, why are you going?"

"I was talked into it," said Mrs. White, with awful solemnity; "before I knew where I was—money and all!"

The wedding party were to have a very fine breakfast before the marriage took place and then the whole party were to go to Hampton Court.

Tom was in the highest spirits, wrote some elegant verses, which he presented to

his aunt, and greatly distinguished himself at breakfast.

Sophy and her lover, were not so gay, they were wondering, when their turn would come !

And Mrs. White, herself, declared to Sophy on their road to church :

“ She wished she was going the other way ! ”

In short it was not by any means a gay affair, but they were soon fairly established in their comfortable village Inn, which their joint savings had enabled them to rent and furnish ; the gaieties at High Elms, which soon became nearly incessant, often filled their Inn with guests, even of the higher rank ; and they were not only prosperous but happy for a year or more, but to one of Mr. Stock's personal appearance, the life of jollity though not of intemperance which he could scarcely fail to lead, was very dangerous, and after one or two slight warnings, the old man suddenly fell down, never to rise again in life. Mrs. Stock having sold her

business and relet the Inn to great advantage took the house in the village to which Horace and his papers came now and then.

He was going there to the christening of Luke's son and heir, and liked the idea of going down more than usual; he satisfied himself it was because he longed for the fresh air!

Grace and her brother found their place in all the beauty of a fine autumn; Luke called on them, apologising for Emily, and Stephen Forrester rode to High Elms.

He found far more than he expected in the stables of Luke; his hunters were the finest in the county, not even excepting the Duke of Lancaster's; he ran horses at the races of the next county; and he kept an absurd number for himself and all his numerous visitors.

Stephen was lost in admiration of the really beautiful creatures, but also lost in wonder at Luke's supporting such an establishment of grooms and horses upon his income. He did not, in fact: for Mrs.

Vernon's savings (for Horace) justified Luke in a little self-indulgence.

He had told his brother in confidence that as he understood nothing but horses he wished to show how well he understood them !

An hour after Stephen had taken his leave, Luke mounted his favorite hack, and rode off musingly to Mr. Browning's office, in the old county town.

Threading the rather narrow streets, bowing awkwardly, now to a neighbouring squire, then to a dignitary of the cathedral, then coming upon two sauntering young officers. Next getting out of the way of a party of them driving a four-in-hand, then bowing to a party of young ladies on their shopping expeditions, Luke past through the principal street, and entering a very narrow one, stopped at a door, calling to a boy, with an injunction to take care of his horse, for if he didn't he would assuredly break his stupid head, the master of High Elms entered the office of the old lawyer

who had been Mrs. Vernon's confidential man of business.

Notwithstanding the value of such a client as Luke, it was always with very considerable and involuntary dislike that Mr. Browning transacted business with him ; whether it was that the suspicions of Mrs. White when the will was lost, which she had so tearfully and indignantly communicated to him, dwelt on his mind in spite of his very sincere endeavours to dislodge them, it is impossible to say, but certain it was, that do what he would Mr. Browning had a not-to-be-conquered dislike and even contempt for Luke ; and it must have been well grounded, for since Mrs. Vernon's death no one had seen so much of Luke ; and no one knew so well how harsh a master and how hard a landlord was the fortunate possessor of his brother's supposed inheritance.

The old lawyer rose to receive him, and saw in a moment that on Luke's sullen brow there was more purpose than usual, but Mr. Browning was, with all his experience, as-

tonished ; and in spite of all his habitual self-command showed that he was so ; when Luke began to unfold his errand.

“ He must have more ready money ; he had lost at the last races ; he had been unlucky, and come how it might, or cost what it would, he must have at once...a very considerable sum.”

What passed in the old lawyer's mind it may not be difficult to surmise, as after a pause he said, almost to himself...

“ Already !”

CHAPTER III.

LUKE gave way to his family failing, till he and Emily were anything but happy, a miserable couple were those two, who had every thing that life can give, to make them happy! and how sad for Emily was the contrast, between the unprovoked unkindness of her husband, and the flatteries and devotion, she met with from almost every other man. It mattered not who was present, his harsh conduct was always the same, and that she bore with almost untiring good

humour and with unflinching patience—then flew for comfort to society, and flirtation ; it was a melancholy state of things.

Luke was often now laid up with one of the fits of gout to which he had become subject ; his natural predisposition thereto having been greatly aided and developed by his having the best cook within thirty miles, and his living in a series of dinner parties ; the consequences of which by no means improved his temper. He was decidedly what Blanche had said he was, “ a wretch.” A lady’s word ...but very full of meaning.

There was to be a grand Fête and Matinée dansante upon the occasion of the christening of Luke’s son and heir, and anxiously was the weather watched...many a pair of bright young eyes gazed on the clouds with an enquiring look, for many miles round High Elms ; for instead of a mere ball or dinner the neighbouring belles were expecting to be gay and dancing, for at least twelve hours ! No one enjoys society so much as a country girl ; her heart and her

spirits are as fresh as her complexion ; she does not know what people mean when they complain that parties are a bore.

The day came at last ; the weather was magnificent ; the lovely grounds at High Elms were ornamented up and down the sunny slopes by the white dresses and gay colours of the party. Every one was in high spirits, even the disinherited Horace Leigh !

And yet Blanche was there with her lover.

He had got over that !

“ Where the —— is Emily ? ” said Luke, in his most savage tones, to his brother ; “ Lord and Lady Allingford are just arrived and she is nowhere to be found ! ”

The lady of the house had indeed deserted her post in a very unjustifiable manner, and Horace went in search of her.

“ Have you seen Mrs. Leigh ? ” was his enquiry of a young lady.

“ Yes, I heard her say, ten minutes ago, that she must go into the shade.”

There was nothing in the words ; but the tone and manner struck him as singular.

He asked of some one else the same simple question.

“ I saw her pass in that direction,” replied another young but married lady.

And there was something in *her* manner that he did not like.

What could the pretty Emily be absenting herself for, at the moment when she was most wanted ?

Another minute and he had discovered her...one of a group certainly...and enjoying the coolness of the shade of the old elms ; but apart from the rest listening with her sweetest smiles to one of the finest specimens of a Dragoon officer, that the eyes of Horace had ever rested on.

If the English aristocracy are, as they are said to be, the handsomest race in the world, Major Brandon was a living proof of the observation...he was the very beau ideal of “ an officer.”

That word ! that name ! how magically

interesting it usually is to all young ladies under twenty. We believe if one half of that pretty and judicious class were to give their private idea of a more delightful world than the one we live in, we verily believe, they would, if they dared, ask for a world full of "*officers!* to dance with."

In London we have no idea of officers, or their real value; that delightful set of "*danseurs*" are lost in the crowd; but in a country neighbourhood...no words can be brought to describe the value which is placed upon them, by the young ladies...*and themselves!*

And with the very pearl of officers was Mrs. Luke Leigh flirting in a manner highly amusing to herself, *and the lookers on.*

"Emily, Lady Allingford has just arrived. You are wanted at your post...will you take my arm?" said Horace.

"*Mine?*" said the elegant militaire, in a tone of tender questioning to which she answered by taking his arm instead of that of her brother.

Horace had spoken gravely as he would to a naughty child; but she nodded affectionately at him, and went to receive her guests.

Horace looked after them with involuntary admiration, and remembering the looks and tones of the two ladies he had spoken to, came...as men very easily do come...to the conclusion; that they were jealous.

To describe Major Brandon's character would be an impossibility, for he had none; but in a word, he was an amateur-soldier, and a professional lady-killer.

Grace had not danced more than once with him before she told Blanche Trevor, that she thought he was "a Master of Arts;" but pretty Mrs. Leigh did not see through the glitter of his outward manner and appearance, the utter shallowness of mind, or the still more complete absence of principle.

He was about thirty, the only brother of a wealthy Baron, and said to be the best waltzer in the regiment...he was exactly the

style of person to be admired beyond measure by people in general, and also exactly the style of person... Grace Forrester delighted to quiz.

"Very fine girl, new face!" said he to one of his brother officers.

"Fifty-thousand pounder!" was the answer.

"Indeed," said Major Brandon in an indifferent tone; he was so decidedly not a marrying man that the intelligence had no interest for him, but he admired, and asked to be introduced to her.

Grace Forrester had one weakness very unusual in a lady, she was so very conscious of her fortune that she forgot her face, and to punish the bewitching man of moustaches for having already discovered her attentions as the only heiress in the county, she resolved to affect anything that might make him feel he was wasting on her the attentions that would be so gratefully received by anybody else; her great aim was, in every way that was at all consistent with her own

dignity, to disconcert the Adonis of the regiment. At last it struck her, that a stupid simplicity, for which she knew her appearance would not exactly prepare him, would be the most effectual way of amusing herself at his expense.

Grace had a horror of officers, so many of them had proposed to her!

With the first turn of the waltz she discovered that he must pique himself on his dancing; and accordingly declared "that their style was so different, she was afraid she could not manage to dance with him, she thought they had better sit down!"

"What a lovely bouquet," said Major Brandon addressing her when they were seated, in the formula with which he always began the conversation with his partners, "such perfection of form and colour; so like the person who made it."

"You have not seen our gardener, or you would hardly say that," said Grace without a smile.

And the militaire twirled his moustache in silence—he could not make her out.

“I thought it must have been yourself; both are so—beautiful,” replied he after a pause.

“Are we?” answered Grace with great simplicity.

“Love and flowers seem made for one another,” hazarded the officer.

“Yes,” replied the lady in a decided tone, “very.”

“Very what?” enquired the gentleman.

“Very *conveniently* for conversation,” answered Grace.

“Of course,” replied the major hastily; he thought her as odd as she was handsome, and did not know but that she might take him out of his depth.

“Will you take another turn?”

“Yes, if you will alter your style.”

“I fear,” said the handsome soldier curling his lip, “that I can hardly do that,” for the better thought he.

“The best partner I ever had was the Prince of Civita Vecchia,” said Grace, naming a young Italian of whom she thought he must have heard in town; “he danced quite differently.”

And by the mortified air of the admired Major Brandon, she saw she had touched his vanity, for he, as well as herself, was aware that during the year the young foreigner had appeared like a galloping comet at all the best balls in town; he had been without a rival as a dancer.

To revenge himself, Major Brandon would not ask her where or how she met the young Italian; he doubted not that she was dying to tell him; but it was not so—the end and aim of Grace was gained.

The irresistible man was greatly annoyed; he strongly suspected that the beauty of the day did not admire him! and he determined this should not continue: so veiling his real displeasure he put all the artillery of his usual looks and speeches into full play; all of which Grace met with a kind of stolid

simplicity, which highly amused herself, and Horace, who *happening* to be standing near her several times, perceived her evident intention of annoying the only man he thought at all calculated to engage her particular attention ; and he not only perceived, but rejoiced at it.

Grace Forrester was not to be blinded by exterior ; and Horace found himself pleased he could not exactly have declared at what.

“ May I have the honour of the next quadrille, though I am not, now, a dancing man ?” asked Horace Leigh.

“ I shall be very happy,” answered Grace, and she meant it ; for she liked him much.

“ Do you remember our agreeing so well on the subject of presentiments ?” observed he, turning his intelligent eyes upon her beautiful and now animated face, “ I am so glad to find you guilty of a little superstition ; in these iron days of fact a little fancy is a pleasant thing...it is better to believe too much even than too little.”

“Not always,” answered Grace, “I can give you a case in point. A servant in the household of a friend of ours gave warning because his collection of phrenological casts *walked at night*—she believed decidedly I think, too much; but according to your theory she was right, and wiser than if she had believed less,” and she turned upon him one of her most arch and radiant smiles.

The effect of one of which *had* been compared by a devoted juvenile, to the sudden and overpowering splendour of a policeman’s lanthorn.

“You are unanswerable,” said Horace with a slight bow, owning himself conquered.

“*Example* is better than precept!” concluded Grace.

“In your hands,” replied the gentleman. “Allow me to enquire, if the question be not impertinent,” continued he, “if you believe in ghosts?”

“Let it suffice for you,” said Grace, with

pretended gravity, "till our acquaintance shall be at least six meetings old, that I believe in all ghost-stories—that is enough for any reasonable person...do you not think so, Mr. Leigh?"

"I am very much afraid, that before long," said Horace, "I should think as you did—whether I would or no!"

He said this involuntarily; for Grace was very fascinating.

"Sir," said Grace, "you are trenching on the province of the officers! Sensible men should not pay compliments!"

"If they can help it!" answered Horace Leigh, in such a penitent voice that Grace laughed merrily.

They were congenial spirits, and they felt it.

"I have," said she, after a pause occasioned by the figure of the quadrille, "I have one fond and foolish fancy, and I often wonder much if others have it; but one cannot speak of these things to everybody,

Mr. Leigh," and she looked in his earnest face with all the confidence which he invariably inspired in man or woman.

"What may it be?" said Horace very gently, "I may have had the same, for before I became the work-a-day man of business, I had my fancies too."

"It is that the sympathy produced by real affection, gives one a strange and otherwise impossible fore-knowledge," observed Grace, thoughtfully.

The smile faded from the face of Horace Leigh "real affection"; for whom, what did she mean? he longed to ask but dared not, but Grace continued:

"You will think me foolish, Mr. Leigh, but I will tell you. The only person I have ever been parted from for whom I had a real affection, except dear Blanche, is—"

Horace looked sharply down at her.

"Is Stephen," said Grace, meeting his look, "and when he was travelling I always had an instinctive knowledge, a nervous

dread and sleepless fancy at times without a cause, that he was ill or in danger."

Horace smiled.

"But, Mr. Leigh, indeed, by a comparison of dates, I always made him own that he *was* ill or in danger...at that very time, however far away...this is what I meant by my fine sentence about sympathy and affection!" concluded Grace, laughing at herself, and yet in earnest.

Horace was so pleased to find that she had alluded only to her brother, that he did nothing but smile in a foolish, because uncalled for manner.

And Grace thought he was smiling at her.

"You are laughing at me," said she.

"Not so," said Horace Leigh, recalled by her unjust suspicion, "I cannot understand, but I believe you."

"And you never had the feeling?" asked Grace, in a disappointed tone.

"Not yet," said Horace, "I may never have cared enough—*as yet*."

And without meaning it, he laid a stress upon the word which did not strike her attention—he was beginning already to fancy he might care more than he had ever cared.

The brilliant and intellectual beauty of Grace Forrester, was dazzling his eyes.

“Fancy!” said she returning to him, with her smooth and gliding steps; “having to dance off to a very lively tune, in the very midst of such a conversation as ours! ...it is decidedly one of the miseries of this world.”

“I have heard it is worse for those who are left behind, than for those who go,” said Horace, with a bright smile.

“And *your* presentiments?” enquired Grace; “which always turn out so true?... will you not tell me some of them.”

“They are of too painful a nature, Miss Forrester, to be confided in a scene like this—even to you,” said Horace, remembering all his past sorrows; “few young mens’

lives are as full of trials, as mine has been."

The smile and the animation faded for a moment from the radiant countenance of Grace, her queen-like beauty melted into a far gentler and softer mein, as she said in a low voice :

"I beg your pardon."

"Some day," said Horace Leigh; "some day you may know what I have....."

He said no more.

"But one presentiment," said Grace, more gaily, unwilling to relinquish the subject, which was an interesting one to her; "at least has deceived you...what harm has that really elegant person, Mr. Green, done you...as yet...you must own that one was unfounded."

And she looked round at him...his eyes were fixed on Blanche, who stood at some little distance with her lover, with such a sad expression in them, that Grace read it at once; the truth, as she thought, flashed upon

her. How could she have been so stupid and so blind ? the many little things, which had puzzled her, became in a moment clear as day, he had loved Blanche...he was a disappointed man. She fancied she had guessed his secret !

CHAPTER IV.

“ I WONDER if this *dejeuner* of the Forresters’ will be worth the trouble of going to ? ” superciliously observed one of a group of officers, about a week after the christening at High Elms.

“ You had better *not* think it worth while, as you can’t go,” said Captain Bellasis.

“ I wish there was no such thing as duty ! ” energetically exclaimed the first speaker.

“ Amen,” replied one or two others.

“ Oh, by the way, Brandon,” said Captain Bellasis, who was rather looked up to, and altogether a privileged person, “ you did not seem to make quite so decided a conquest, as you usually do, of the beautiful Miss Forrester...it was a failure, eh ?”

The fascinating major did not condescend to answer, he only gave a smile of such a peculiar expression as was evidently intended to convey to his brother officers the fact that *he* thought it no such thing.

“ Great disappointment I’m afraid,” continued captain Bellasis ; “ but you can’t expect to engross the attention of *both* the prettiest women in the neighbourhood.”

The colour mounted slightly to the cheek of Major Brandon, and he smiled again, in a very different manner.

Grace was convinced that he *practised* his smiles ; but she might be doing him an injustice.

“ I think Miss Forrester is far more beautiful than Mrs. Leigh...her face is full of spirit and intelligence,” said Captain

Bellasis ; “ what a pity she does’nt admire you, Brandon !”

“ We shall see to-morrow,” replied the indignant major, impatiently changing the subject ; he dared not enter into a war of words with Bellasis, knowing full well he must be conquered.

The following day Emily came down into the drawing-room, dressed for the *dejeuner* at the Forresters’.

She was looking really lovely, and went up to Luke in all the confidence with which her mirror had inspired her, though the inspection of Luke whenever she was going out was really a thing to be dreaded.

“ Well, Luke dear,” said she, coming up to him, with her sweet smile, “ I am quite ready now.”

Luke rose sullenly from his newspaper... the only thing he ever read, and looked at her as he always did on such occasions.

“ Why what have you done to your hair ?” said he, in a rough voice.

“ I put it back under my bonnet, Luke,

because it is rather out of curl, and this warm day..."

"You don't suppose that...looking such a fright...you are going out with *me*?" said Luke.

"What can I do?" said Emily, humbly.

"Go up this moment and have it curled as usual," said Luke.

"But it will take so long...it is quite straight; and Grace asked us to go early, Luke," entreated Emily.

"What's Grace to me?" said Luke; "do as I bid you."

"Indeed I cannot," answered Emily with spirit; "now that I am dressed and ready, Luke, I *will* not."

"Then you don't go at all," said Luke, seating himself again...snatching the bud of Cape jessamine from his button-hole, flinging it passionately away, and resuming his paper. "Ring," ordered he, in a harsh voice.

"What for?" said his wife, who was still standing there.

“Ring,” reiterated Luke.

And then Emily guessed he meant to countermand the carriage; and justly indignant as she was at this conduct...the disappointment of not going would have been too great...and she humbled herself.

“Oh, *do* go, Luke; Mr. Forrester will think it so strange; I will alter...my hair.”

And she had it curled hastily with irons; and Luke being satisfied, they entered their carriage.

All this was nothing new.

Emily Leigh had a good temper and a gentle one...but her husband treated her like a naughty child; and often and often when she entered a crowded room, in which she soon became the gayest of the gay, her eyes were bright with suppressed tears; and the brilliant colour on her cheek was that of burning indignation.

Yet Luke was very proud of her, she was *His* wife; and to see her so much courted and admired, was one of his greatest pleasures

Grace was awaiting the arrival of her guests, and Horace was the first announced.

"How kind of you to stay for us to-day," said she frankly offering him her hand, "and equally kind of you to come early...your sister promised me *she* would, but has not kept her word."

"Luke is...rather uncertain," said Horace.

"How lovely she is!" said Grace.

"Ah, Miss Forrester;" replied Horace Leigh in a tone of great feeling, "we were friends in our young days, you and I—might I claim, for my young, giddy sister, the blessing of your friendship; there is so much of good in her, but she wants watching and advice, she needs a monitor. Blanche has been one to her...as she has been one to me, Miss Forrester, but Blanche has other interests now;" and the contraction of the brows which always gave him such a look of intense mental suffering came upon him then...visible to the pitying eyes of Grace.

"But if," continued Horace, "you would promise to watch over her—for me; I

should go back to my work in peace, it is a singular thing to ask ; you are as young as she is...but so—”

Grace frowned involuntarily for she saw by his face it must be something flattering.

And Horace saw the frown.

“ So...different,” said he.

They understood one another well already.

He could not tell her that during the week he had been spending in the society round High Elms, he had been much annoyed by the serious flirtation carried on by Major Brandon and his thoughtless sister, and that he thought she might perhaps open Emily’s unconscious eyes to the fact that it was much commented on ; but Grace well knew all that he meant to say, and another subject rose between them of great and mutual interest.

“ You told me this was a gay and *tant soit peu* empty set,” said Grace laughing, “ but I was not prepared...”

“ For Major Brandon ?” laughed Horace, who had been much amused at the ineffectual

attempts which the irresistible *militaire* had been making to win her favorable notice.

Grace laughed merrily.

"He is to me without exception the most amusing creature; how any one so elegant can be so absurd is quite a miracle."

"I wish *every one* had your opinion," observed Horace gravely.

"He speaks so low...he has such a mere ghost of voice at times, that it would be really a good joke to pretend a deafness...and not hear him! Make him repeat his speeches!" continued Grace carried away by the ludicrous idea; and then solemnly addressing Horace she said, "Mr. Leigh—if in the course of this day you should discover that I am deaf, do not be surprised...I have caught cold!"

And Horace bowed, a grave and solemn bow, and said,

"Just as you please!"

Just then Stephen came in, and then the guests arrived, but the disinherited man looked forward to the amusements of the day with more interest than he thought he could have

had in any such things; he had to watch Emily...and Grace.

The tears almost came into poor Emily's eyes as Grace reproached her with being late.

"I am too happy to be here...at all! Luke was so cross," whispered the young wife with an indiscretion which was creeping fast into her conduct. "Such a life as I lead."

"Oh, hush! take care," said Grace with a terrified look, lest any one should hear; giving to the gay and giddy Mrs. Leigh—her first lesson.

Emily was leaning on her husband's arm when Major Brandon approached her for the first time. Luke never interfered with her gay and laughing flirtations, though he did with every thing else, and his presence never made the slightest difference in her behaviour, but there was a more refined charm in the practised flatteries of this last admirer, than in any of those, which had as yet been addressed to her...he was truly a master of arts, and the girlish simplicity

of Emily, did not perceive that he was merely exercising his profession.

He offered her his arm, to take her into the magnificently decked tent, in which the *dejeuner* was served, and Horace was accidentally seated opposite them : across the narrow table, he could scarcely avoid hearing their conversation although the officer was whispering so low, that Horace nearly laughed, thinking of Grace.

Emily was blushing and smiling, turning off the exaggerated flatteries as she best might ; and Horace sat there, with a grave and stern demeanour, the giddy Emily appealing to him, every now and then !

“ Oh Horace do you hear that ? ” (she saw that he had heard) “ Major Brandon declares that I...little I...am every thing in the world ! I wish I was—to Luke.”

The pretty Mrs. Leigh caught her brother's look of reproof, returned it with a pretty face of penitence, and then went on just as before.

She meant no harm, she never stopped in

her wild career for her husband, so why should she for Horace ?

But from that hour a certain antagonism, if such a word may be used, arose between the keen-witted Barrister, and the fascinating *Militaire*—began that day, to end as it might.

The party had passed off gaily, and dancing had, for some time, been going on, when Grace, as she passed Horace, happening to meet his look, said quietly :

“ *Attention !*” and the little soldier-like air, with which she drew herself up, so slightly marked, that he alone could perceive it was “ *impayable*.”

She had given him the word of command and he failed not to obey, greatly amused ; as he saw her the next instant take the arm of Major Brandon. Horace could not resist the temptation of standing near her, challenged as he had been, to do so.

“ Your grounds are very lovely, but any place would be a Paradise, with such an Eve,” said the bewitching major, giving a

peculiarly devoted smile, from under his black moustaches.

“ I beg your pardon—what did you say. I am quite deaf with a bad cold,” said Grace, giving a look so blank and devoid of meaning, turning up to him such a *deaf face*, that he was quite deceived.

“ Your grounds are very lovely, but any place would be a paradise, with such an Eve !” repeated he in the same low tone, but feeling very foolish.

“ Eh ?” said Grace with her beautiful deaf face, “ I really cannot hear ; you speak so low !”

If the irresistible man piqued himself on one fascination more than another, it was his whisper ; so these words cut him to the heart—if he had one.

The speech was in his opinion much too good to be altogether lost, he had so often found it well received ! that for the third time, actually coloring with annoyance, he repeated it, this time so loud that the next couple looked at them, and the major met

the wondering eyes of Emily and the sarcastic smile of Captain Bellasis.

"I'm glad you think so," answered Grace at last, a reply of which the Major could make nothing.

"A pity, so much beauty should be deaf!" ejaculated the Major, very slightly, indeed almost imperceptibly, pressing the hand which he was at that moment holding.

"Dead!" said Grace, in great apparent surprise, "what Beauty is dead? Miss Vandeleur looks rather delicate...is she dead?... poor girl!"

"Oh, no! I am not aware that any one is dead...I think you did not quite understand..."

"I *am* so deaf...isn't it dreadful?" answered Grace, giving him a look which demanded his utmost compassion.

"Nothing could be a defect in *you*," replied the Major...he had a very remarkable way of saying *you* to all very pretty girls... it generally led them to suppose, all sorts of things.

"Nothing can have any effect on me! You think I am deaf for life!" said Grace.

"I said," replied the agonized *Militaire*, "I said; nothing could be a defect in you."

"Eh?" said Grace Forrester, what *do* you say?"

But at that moment Major Brandon danced off...he thought it a most fortunate escape.

And Grace stood there looking demure and quiet beyond her usual demeanour; but she suddenly turned her head, slightly waved her beautiful bright curls by the triumphant movement, and gave such a mischievous look at Horace, that he could not resist a smile which ended in a laugh.

And Major Brandon turned in the dance, saw the eyes of Horace Leigh fixed upon him with a satirical expression, and though he was unconscious why or wherefore, from that hour he hated him.

It is not good to provoke even the most insignificant of creatures.

"If you would but speak louder!" continued Grace to her fascinating partner, "I can hear other people."

"There are *some* things," said the Major, giving a smile which showed his white teeth gleaming beautifully from under the jet black moustaches, "*some* things which can only be spoken in a low tone."

"Very true," said Grace, "but you need *not say those things!* at least till I can hear."

"It is impossible to see you, Miss Forrester, and not to feel—"

"It is your turn to dance," interrupted the lady.

"You were saying something?" enquired she when he returned, and this question, which he felt convinced she never could have asked if she had understood what he said, perfectly confounded the unlucky *militaire*, and he stood by the side of the beauty of the room...fairly speechless.

As he stood there, looking thoroughly disconsolate, the gentleman standing next to him in the quadrille, quietly but steadily looked at him...a flush of great and visible annoyance past over the Major's white but narrow forehead; for the gentleman was Captain Bellasis, and the Major saw in his face that a persecution was in store for him ...goaded on by this he determined that *coûte qui coûte* Grace *should* admire him: he attempted again, and in spite of her infirmity, the one of all other most embarrassing to a whispering lover! to make her, if possible, understand those honey speeches he had always found so effective hitherto; "She must be flattered...if she could but hear!"

"I have been much in town," said Major Brandon, "I have been acquainted with all the prettiest women of the day; but never did I see one so really beautiful...."

"Never saw one really beautiful!" answered Grace Forrester, "you *have* astonished me ...what *is* your style?"

"*You*," said the Major, quite aloud for him.

"Eh?" answered she, with her deaf face.

And Major Brandon felt inclined to murder himself or her, or somebody, he was in such a rage. But still he would not give the matter up!

"The quadrille is nearly over, and I had so much to say!" piteously exclaimed he to Miss Forrester, with such a look as made words quite superfluous.

"Say it another time!" said Grace, "I must get partners for the young ladies now," and she left him...more annoyed than ever he had been in his life...foiled...yet how could she help being so deaf!...he hoped it would go off, and then...

And then in the meantime he went to Emily, and in no deaf, unwilling ears did he say nearly word for word all he had said to Grace, beginning with:

"Any place would be a Paradise with such an Eve...as you."

"Nonsense!" replied the pretty Mrs. Leigh, but she almost believed he thought so.

People ought to be warned that this, by no means uncommon practice of making use of the very same compliments to different young ladies, is rather dangerous though it saves trouble. Young ladies have been known to repeat the soft nothings to one another, and so discover that the person they thought so elegantly agreeable...has in reality a *circular* of conversation...and they end by supposing all his agreeableness is learnt by heart...it destroys the illusion.

"Are you going to the ball at The Abbey ...of course you are...*I hope*," said Major Brandon in an inaudible voice to his next partner.

"I don't know," replied Emily, "Mr. Leigh...perhaps...will not allow me."

"Surely *you* can persuade him to anything," said the *militaire*.

"Oh, no!" replied Emily, "not I...I wish I could...as I should like to go, I shall

say nothing about it...if he thinks I don't wish it..."

"Well?" asked the Major.

"He will make me go!" said the young wife, who had been so thoroughly annoyed by Luke in the morning, that she was pouring out her griefs in a very unnecessary manner to the sympathising and *criticising* Major.

"Is it possible," replied he "that any man can treat so lovely, so exquisite..."

"Only when he is cross," said Emily, who had given way to the little ebullition of temper without considering, for a moment, whether it was right or wrong to have done so—she never did think, for as she once told Horace, "it only made her unhappy."

And Major Brandon did his best to console her; he paid her great and devoted attention, which she received so gaily and so gladly, that people began to remark it; and Horace thought he had better try and put an end to the flirtation. This he effected by taking a seat by her, and entering into their

conversation: it was not difficult for him to silence one so shallow as the bewitching Major, he overwhelmed him with wit and conversation, till Emily turned to him with delighted attention, and laughed so happily and merrily that the Major felt himself eclipsed...to be eclipsed by a brother was a defeat so signal and so unexampled, that suddenly rising he left the field to the conqueror...but, as he went, gave Horace a look with an expression of malice in it of which those studiously softened eyes did not seem capable.

This really ignominious failure had been noted by the keen eyes of Captain Bellasis, keen in the pursuit of his amusement.

And such was the unmerciful use he made of his observations that evening, that he very nearly drove his elegant and irresistible brother officer into distraction.

"By Jove," soliloquised the officer, "I will give up that beautiful Grace Forrester, I half suspect, if such a thing were possible, that she is laughing at me...I leave her;"

and he ground his teeth like a wild animal, "to that Mr. Leigh, in my way *there*; well; *let* him be. In my way with that pretty and silly sister-in-law, he shall not stand again."

One party more, before Horace went back to his work; and Major Brandon acted on his resolution with so much effect that Horace felt himself called upon to interfere.

So taking Emily on the lawn alone, after a quiet dinner at High Elms, leaving Luke over his wine—affectionately looking round at her with his kind eyes...tenderly pressing her little white arm against his own, Horace, in the full confidence it would be well received, began his lecture.

"My darling Emily, will you attend seriously to what I have to say."

"I can't be serious," said his pretty sister shaking back her light dancing curls, and looking up in his face—"except when Luke torments me."

"Hush! dearest, do not say such things—even to me," said Horace.

Emily pouted; she was deteriorating fast, the companionship with Luke was spoiling a sweet and gentle nature; in good hands, young as she was, she might have become anything...but in Luke's! no one could say what evils might spring up in that unhappy home.

"My sweet sister," said Horace kindly, "I am going away to Town—I wish to warn you before I go, I earnestly wish you to be on your guard; Major Brandon is an unprincipled man, people will talk of you if you go on flirting with him so much."

Emily was in what, can only be described as a pet.

"Luke doesn't mind it...I don't see why you need!"

"It is fortunate for you that Luke does not see this matter as...*other people do*," said Horace Leigh, hoping to alarm his totally thoughtless sister.

"I am sure I am miserable enough at home...it is very hard if I may not be

allowed to amuse myself in society," said Mrs. Leigh, tossing her pretty head.

"But dearest—such a professed flirt...as Major Brandon."

"I like that style of man," said Emily so very decidedly, that for a moment Horace was silent with astonishment; could this be his sweet and docile Emily? he forgot she had been spending years of troubled life... with Luke.

Horace was puzzled; he scarcely liked to speak very seriously...he did not wish to attach too much importance to the matter...he knew too much of human nature to think that would be wise, and yet what could he do?

"People are talking, Emily; the conduct of a young wife should never be the subject of remark."

"Oh, let them talk," said Emily..."what does it matter...if Luke is not angry?"

"Some day, perhaps, he may be."

"Ah, well...*I'm used to it!*" said Emily, softening fast..."he is so unjust; I may as

well give him cause for anger! Oh, Horace ...I am so miserable...if you knew half his unkindness !..."

" I see enough," said Horace, bitterly.

" Then do you wonder I try to forget it ...as I can ?" said Emily.

And Horace did *not* wonder, though he dared not own it.

There was a quickness in Emily's step, and a little motion of the shoulders, which showed she was greatly annoyed at this conversation, not to say angry.

" But, Emily, Major Brandon is indeed a dangerous man...more so than others ; I do entreat you, as a favour to myself, drop this flirtation...it is going much too far."

" Well, well," said Emily, coming to a full stop on the lawn, and tearing up the grass with her little foot..." if you insist on my cutting him I will, but I *cannot* see the use of it ; to please you, Horace, I will cut him."

" Thank you," said her delighted brother.

" You are depriving me of my only

amusement !” said Emily, like a child as she was.

“ But you are doing what is right,” said Horace.

After a moment, during which she stood there half sorry and half angry, Emily left him ; and Horace walked homewards to his cottage with a sigh of relief that he had performed that duty.

But it was long...months...almost years before Emily cared again for Horace, as she had done before that interview.

She *could not* see the use of it.

CHAPTER V.

IN a small, miserable apartment in a wretched hotel at Nymwequen sat an Englishman, of sickly appearance ; his large eyes were bright, but it was with the fever of the mind, and his hands were burning, till the sensation was nearly unbearable ; the room was dark and closed up from the fresh air, and the Englishman panted for a refreshing breeze, yet did not go out of the room to seek it ; he sat there with his eyes dilated and glistening, leaning his emaciated face

on his long, thin hands, resting his elbows on the table, and his chin upon his tightly clenched fingers...the features sharpened by anxiety and illness ; the mind at work...at dismal, hopeless work...of retrospective thought.

The room was very small, but they could afford no better, that sorrowful and weary pair...for they were *two* ; they had that comfort...they were together...nothing but death could ever part those two, in their devoted love. They had much to bear...they had borne much...but they had been *together* ; this is a word which often and often has a potent spell for *one*, but it was a comfort equally to *both* of these unhappy creatures.

She sat a little apart, hearing every breath, shrinking almost at his thoughts---she read them in his face so well ; and yet she never *seemed* to look, or watch---Oh no ! she sat there at some useful work---fully engaged it seemed---but watching with her very

heart, the husband of her youth---their gay and hopeful youth !

The room was very mean and strange in that hotel, in the odd town of Nymwequen ---the only light came from a large skylight which formed indeed nearly the whole ceiling of the room.

“ Shall we not walk out by the river ? the air is so oppressive here,” said the soft voice of the gentle wife, who spoke without looking up, “ it will make you feverish,” more feverish she might have said, with truth, but would not, men cannot bear to be thought ill.

“ No, love, I do not feel---inclined,” he said ; “ able,” he might have said.

“ There must be a thunder storm at hand,” observed the wife.

“ I hope there is---I feel so very ill, it must be that.”

“ Of course, it always did affect you,” said the wife, but she did not *think* it was of course.

In that strange country where the water

rises above the land, and the inhabitants ought to be found web footed ; the *sky* is just the *landscape* ; unless you look on buildings, you look on sky and water, one is tempted to enquire for the land !

All sky and water ; what a choice spot whereon to watch the coming storm.

At last the small apartment felt like a furnace, and with a violent effort the invalid arose, and said, " he would try to reach the river side."

And Mr. Simmons, leaning on the slight arm of his wife, who walked beside him, carefully hiding her weary and anxious eyes from his observation under her close bonnet, went slowly down to the river...the sunny Rhine. Broad, flat and hideous ! causing one to wonder that its waters were not disgusted with the change...remembering what they had been...so loved and praised, so beautiful and glad.

" Ha !" said the enthusiast in his low voice, " the storm is coming up indeed, t'will be an awful one."

Just as they reached the spot from which the sight was grandest, they saw another couple, young and fair to look upon, but Mr. Simmons turned sharply and hastily away.

"Not there, not there—to meet those English strangers," and they strolled a little way in the opposite direction.

"Horrid bore this storm," said the young man they so anxiously avoided. "I hate a thunder-storm, don't you—it does make such a row!"

"We must make haste, or I shall spoil my bonnet," said the young wife looking alarmed, "*I must* say the prettiest bonnets I have seen a long time were at Cologne."

"Let's have a look," replied her husband, and they stood a moment before the street shut out their view.

"What clouds!" exclaimed the lady.

"Yes, just like---*Ink!*" replied the gentleman.

"They are gone now," said Mrs. Simmons timidly to her husband; for he had been ill again of late, and his nerves were so greatly

shattered that even she did not always know what she might venture to say, or even when she might dare to speak.

And the clouds rolled on. Darkness was coming on the face of earth and sky; the thunderclouds were close at hand.

And those two...poetic in their long enduring love...poetic in their delicate and cultivated minds...poetic, above all, in undeserved misfortune...were lookers on upon that awful scene.

And whilst they looked came a bright flash; so near it seemed that the unhappy wife clung to her husband as if she would throw herself between him and the danger.

"We must go home, this is so bad for you, you will be worse," whispered the anxious wife.

"Not yet," said the enthusiast in a voice admitting of no reply.

"Look at the rolling clouds...gathering as they go...look at them darkening the whole sunny earth on their resistless passage...look at the only gleam of brighter things,

it is the dangerous flash...we of all people, Kate, should watch the storm....Is it not like *our fate*."

She answered not; she merely pressed the feeble arm that rested upon hers...hers had become the strongest now.

"Oh, Kate, *my* Kate," said the unhappy man; "how dark *our* clouds are now! this heat, this burning atmosphere is like the fever of my heart. Oh, I could look upon upon these black still waters, Kate, and wish--- and long"---

"Hush, hush!" replied his wife; "we must return."

And with the thunder pealing nearer every moment, and the bright flashes blinding them, the desolate pair turned, with slow steps, towards the temporary home of their small room, in the third rate hotel. They ordered lights, and Mr. Simmons again covered his face with his hands—communicating with his despairing thoughts.

His poor wife sat, shrinking at the flashes,

starting at the tremendous peals—thinking what she could do to rouse him.

He had said strange things of late, of rest for ever—and eternal sleep—and she dreaded his mood to-night.

“It strikes me,” she observed, as naturally as she could; “that you have never looked in the large tin box, just come from Antwerp—for the paper you want so much---you seem refreshed by our walk---had you not better look at once?”

The inventorro used himself---he was glad, in his restless state, of any slight employment of the hands, and he began to search the box, his wife placed on a chair beside him.

“I dare say it is here,” he said, “for I remember throwing most of my papers into this box when we left England, Kate, two years ago or more! what wretched years! I have not opened this since we left home.”

And he turned over the contents.

“Ha!” said he with sudden energy; “how lucky you persuaded me to look; here

are some papers—of the uttermost importance to Sir Josiah Walgrave...and I did not know I had them...I must see to this to-morrow.—Ah ! what a crash.”

“ It is indeed an awful night,” said Mrs. Simmons.

“ Yes, Kate, and yet I’m glad of it...but for the oppressive heat, I should not have gone down to the river side...and, but for that excitement, I should not have looked amongst these sad remembrances of happier days...I should not have discovered Sir Josiah’s papers.”

“ Bother the tempest,” said the young man, we have already spoken of, to his wife, in their far pleasanter apartments. “ Every thing is worse here, than in England...even thunder storms!”

“ So they are, dear,” replied the lady.

The whole of that night, the inmates of Nymwequen could have had little sleep, so unintermitting was the thunder; but nevertheless, every one was early on foot, ready to start by the different steamers; Mr. and

Mrs. Simmons were, however, purposing to stay another day...waiting for letters.

The young couple, already mentioned, were bound for England by the steamer, then puffing and panting at the landing place, and they were about to pay their other bill.

But a dispute arose...and differences of opinion, become serious matters, when neither party can even guess at what the means.

Mr. Simmons was returning to his own room, from an enquiry at the Post-office, when he heard the voice of an Englishman in angry distress...the sweet tones of a woman's voice in expostulation, and a good deal of rather violent language spoken in furious tones, but to no earthly purpose.....Then a soft voice interposed:

"We shall be late, Fred—we shall miss the steamer—oh never mind---pray give it up."

By the excited faces of the host, and his party of angry supporters, Mr. Simmons saw

that this was a serious matter, and though averse to making acquaintance, however slight, with any of his countrymen, he could not resist enquiring what the matter was, and offering his assistance.

“ The imposition ! the rogues ! the foreign-rascals ! ” said the enraged young man ; “ I offer them these two whole handfuls of silver coin, besides this gold, for how on earth am I to understand their ridiculous money---I offer them all this, in payment of their bill, and they won’t take it ; then I offered them all this horrible dirty paper money ; and they won’t take that, and I can’t make them---so what I am to do, I havn’t an idea ! ”

He spoke the truth.

Mr. Simmons scarcely looked at the young Englishman...*he* understood the coinage, though really when in travelling it changes every day or two !---it is no easy matter.

So by degrees, when Fred had produced more money, Mr. Simmonds sorted and

arranged it, paid the bill, and smoothed down the angry party---then looking in the face of the lady, who was warmly thanking him, he recognized, first Isabelle---then Fred.

They did not know him again, he was so altered, and for a moment, he regretted having unguardedly betrayed himself, but when he found, Fred was the son-in-law of Sir Josiah Walgrave, he hastily entered his little room, brought out the packet of letters which he had found---hastily directed them to the lawyer, to whom Sir Josiah entrusted his affairs, in London, and charged Fred to transmit it to him without loss of time---happy to have been able to serve, in some degree, by sending off that packet, the friend, whose interests, he had so deeply injured, Mr. Simmons returned to his own room---happy for a moment, in the midst of all his sad misfortunes. And from that hour, he knew not why; a hope,---without a cause---rose in his mind,

Mr. Simmons believed himself to be a member of the church---but he was nothing ; less than nothing, a heathen philosopher ; believing without knowledge, or faith, or hope---that he was a christian man.

Perfect in probity and in morality, he had no consolation and no peace---for in his great trials, instead of looking to the Hand that sent them, he struggled with despairing violence against their secondary causes.

His affairs were indeed in a deplorable condition, and many a time, as now, in the course of his restless wanderings with his wife, restless, but never extended far from England, lest he should baffle his feverish anxiety for English letters---many an hour had he sat by the waters of the sunny Rhine---and longed and wished to find a quiet dreamless sleep---if he could but be *sure of that*, beneath their waves.

The water had a strange fascination in his eyes, the German writers have felt this and expressed it, and the ruined enthusiast felt

it too, in every nerve. The coolness made him long for the refreshment of the waters to his fevered head, and burning hands; and the shadows looked so deep and green and still,...looked as if *they*, down in their depths, had a quiet and a peace unknown upon the weary earth.

And the stream, as it passed, had a low song of sweet and quiet melody lulling and soothing, courting to sleep, and "what sleep would be so still as that of Death. From sleep one must awake again, to the old thoughts and fears and cares, that were laid down the night before; *the burden must be taken up again*; but the sleep of Death, if one could hope Death were *but sleep*! if one could hope never to wake again, who that was wretched without hope...who that had cares and griefs too heavy to be borne, would not be tempted almost beyond the power of resistance, to throw themselves into the cool, calm waters, rushing by, and sleep...never to wake again—*never again*? but then there

must be no second life, no immortality," and the enthusiast, in his excited state of mind, almost wished there *were none*! "so that he might but rest."

These had been his thoughts, wearing him out; bringing his mind almost within the terrible grasp of insanity, showing themselves in his haggard face, in his wild and absent air; read by his shuddering wife. She had to watch him, knowing that he had thoughts of suicide, and above all to hide from him that she knew it!

Such was the position of the man whose great inventions were calculated to benefit his countrymen, whose merits would, no doubt, be discovered, whose views and inventions would perhaps make a great name and fortune—for another, when *he* was dead and gone. Lying in Christian hope and burial in some green church-yard, or lying without hope under the waters of the rushing stream.

With his over excited mind and his broken frame, who could say *which* it might be...

for he longed to die, and have no more to bear.

This may seem impossible, but to the shattered nerves, the broken spirit, the worn out brain of such a susceptible and disappointed man it is not only possible—it *was* so.

Yet strange to say the meeting with Frederick and Isabelle caused a change in this state of mind slight but not the less real; for altogether against reason—a hope of he knew not what, sprung up without a root in any ground of fact, yet bearing buds, and then by slow degrees, as it were, putting forth leaves.

And what a mercy and a blessing to the good and devoted wife, to see one shade of the despair gone from the face that was the world to her...to feel but a degree less wildly anxious if she missed him, but a moment, from her side; how she had suffered from that undefined but nevertheless horrible fear, of what might happen if she were not near him—how she had trembled and shook if his

absence were longer than she expected, fearing that she might never behold him again in *life* ! how she had watched and feared and wept ; and prayed, that the one creature she loved on earth, might not become *Insane*.

CHAPTER VI.

MORE than two years since Mrs. Vernon died, and still Tom Spildin's fixed resolution that he *would*, and incessant enquiries of the most unsatisfactory people as to whether they thought he *should*, "cut that fellow out", were in full force.

"Father!" said he gravely, "how did you make love to my mother?"

This sudden revival of the tenderest recollections of his youth, had a great effect on Mr. Spildin; he smiled, or more correctly

he smirked, and his little eyes nearly shut themselves up.

“ Why, Tom, you see, its such a long time ago...it is...that I don’t recollect ; oh no!” and he rubbed his odd little hands in evident remembrance of that romantic period of his existence.

“ *You* hav’n’t forgotten;” said Tom, shaking his head in serious reprobation of his father’s conduct, “ you should not tell untruths...you never would let *me* ! and now for you to do it yourself before my face...its a bad example to a young fellow like me, and you ought notto...it isn’t moral, is it—and what’s worse it is not paternal to tell stories.”

“ Why that’s what you have been a-asking me to do, you ungrateful young fellow,” said Mr. Spildin, grinning frightfully, “ hav’n’t you been a wanting me to tell you a story ? answer me that.”

“ Very good, and very true,” said Tom, with great approbation, “ you’re all right.”

"I'm *always* right," said the artist, pompously.

"Oh, yes," said Tom, "go on!"

"Go on?" said his father, "why I hav'n't begun, and I don't know that I shall; for what do *you* want to know for? a prying into the secrets of your father's heart! and a raking up the ashes of the past! I *was* in love *I* was—"

"I don't see any ashes," said Tom, "you've always been very comfortable, I never have seen any ashes—if you mean by them, sorrows and troubles, as I do in my verses."

"I didn't mean anything particular, Tom, don't talk and confuse my ideas."

"You can do that for yourself without me," said the incorrigible genius, unable to resist the temptation of saying such a bit of truth.

"I've a great mind not to tell you a word, sir," said Mr. Spildin, very angrily.

"Just as you please...you've been a working of yourself up, and if you don't tell me

now, you'll disappoint *yourself*," replied the Imperturbable.

Unbounded in his cool impertinence why should not Tom be styled "The Imperturbable."

"You're a young villain," said the artist.

"Very likely," said Tom, "I may be! One never sees oneself as others see us—rather lucky one doesn't."

And Mr. Spildin went off into a tender reverie—his attitude was a favourite one, but not by any means the more elegant on that account—he sat with his feet tucked up on the bar of the chair as if they could not well reach the ground, and they could not well—his two hands were clasped round his knees, and his remarkably ugly little face was bent down almost to his hands.

His attitude was not refined; but his thoughts were—*they* had the natural refinement of real and genuine feeling.

Tom looked at him first with a very satirical smile, at the idea of his father in

love—then with a kind of wonder how his mother ever came to marry him, and then with a kind of involuntary respect for his evidently precious remembrances. Tom was horribly pert and undutiful in words, but he was in reality a good and obedient son.

“Come now let’s have it,” said Tom, “there’s a good old—” fellow he was going to say; but he substituted, just in time, for Mr. Spildin looking up with great severity, “father!”

“Well,” said the artist, “it’s a secret that I thought was buried in my bosom, that I did—I little thought ever to bring it out to my own child such an example;—but,” and he looked round carefully, “your mother and I Tom---*we run away!*”

If the house had tumbled about his ears Tom could not have been more profoundly astonished, he literally gasped, and then he went off into such fits of convulsive laughter, so long and uninterrupted, so loud and hearty that the artist really thought he would be choked---*he* didn’t laugh, and the

more he did not---the more Tom did ; that gravity of his father's very nearly killed him.

" You ran away !" gasped Tom, when he could speak at all. " My gracious !"

" It was no laughing matter," said Mr. Spildin, with great seriousness.

" My mother ran away with *you* ?" gasped Tom.

" And very glad---to---" said the little artist.

Tom *was* surprised.

The artist put himself into the attitude before described.

" I was young once," said he in a doubtful kind of voice, as if he did not feel quite sure about it, but rather thought so on the whole.

" Why you don't say so !" answered the Imperturbable.

" I *was*," continued the artist ; " young ---once...and not so bad...to look at...very like you, my boy !...but my looks is worn out of me now...and I was ambitious, Tom,

...and that's worn out of me...don't be ambitious...*don't*. I was gay, and happy, and full of hope...I was *young*, that's saying every thing."

"I'm not so sure of that; *all of itself* it aint enough," said Tom, as if he knew it from experience.

"It was to me," replied the artist thoughtfully.

"*You* weren't obliged to try and...cut somebody out," said Tom, between his teeth.

"I was! *that's what I was!*" said Mr. Spildin, energetically putting his feet down off the bar of his chair.

"You, father! and you *did?*"

"If I hadn't," said Mr. Spildin; "there wouldn't have been none of us *here*; excepting me...and perhaps the cat," he added on mature deliberation; "she *might* have been."

"Oh father," answered Tom, in an agony of impatience; "do go on."

"I was a painter, Tom, I aspired every

thing! I little thought then, that I should paint tea-caddies at Islington," and Mr. Spildin's voice was as pathetic as its queer tones could be, it quite faded away, under the influence of his feelings. "I studied, Tom, and I got prizes, no one would believe it now!...and what is more; what I believe won *her*...I took care of my old mother...she had seen better days, my boy, but she did not make the gentleman of me, I've made of you."

Tom smiled, half bitterly; he knew that he was a shrewd and clever fellow, but he knew in his heart, that he was not a gentleman, except *at heart*, and there he was, far more than many a man of better birth, and better education than himself...he was a boy, a queer, strange, wayward, foolish boy, ...and yet no common person, and no common character.

However, Mr. Spildin thought all that he said...and what *we think* is after all, provided it is innocent, of more consequence to

our happiness, than what is....Ignorance *is* often bliss.

"But," said Tom, "when did you see my mother first."

"That did it," said Mr. Spildin; "didn't it, that's all...I was a victim, Tom, *I was* to love at first sight...it was romantic...oh it was!"

The undutiful son, could hardly help going off into another dangerous and alarming paroxysm of laughing, at this declaration.

"She didn't love *me* though...by no means," continued the little artist, shaking his head at the sorrowful remembrance; "I do believe she thought me ugly."

"Impossible," said Tom, with a gravity which was nothing short of miraculous.

"She's often told me so since...for a joke," said Mr. Spildin. "Not a bad joke either, Tom?"

"So good that one would think she meant it," answered the Imperturbable.

“ The more I went the more she laughed ; and the more I said the more she laughed,” went on the artist, carried away by his recollections, “ but there was *one*...Tom, one ...at who she never laughed, and that encouraged me ; if she had laughed at him, once, I should have given her up...but that she didn’t, not once.”

“ A rival, sir ? ” [said Tom, greatly excited.

“ A rival,” [said Mr. Spildin, very gravely.

“ And what was he, sir ? ” eagerly enquired Tom.

“ A butcher ! ” said the artist ; “ rich, handsome...with a house, every thing...such a great match ! ” said Mr. Spildin, rubbing his hands ; “ son of a farmer...and a farm to come !—such *a* great match.”

“ And didn’t she like him ? ” enquired Tom, this was becoming interesting.

“ *Yes!* ” said Mr. Spildin, in a loud voice, which startling information, together with the voice, caused Tom to jump.

"Oh law!" said Tom...he hadn't expected that.

"They wanted her to have him," said Mr. Spildin, waving his hand towards some imaginary people—the real ones had long been dead.

"Who is *they*, father?" enquired Tom, with his little eyes sparkling, like red hot coals.

"Father and mother, and all that," replied the artist.

"She should have married him," continued Tom, with sententious gravity.

"Why?" asked the artist.

"Obey your father and your mother, catechism says—and *you* say, even if you don't like it ever so much," said Tom; "I do—she ought to have done so."

Mr. Spildin had got into a scrape he had not thought of. He had begun to allow, to the keen-sighted boy, that his mother had not always done as she was bid, a doctrine, he had inculcated for years.

"If my mother flew in her father's face, why shouldn't I fly in yours?" observed the

Imperturbable, having already made his inferences.

"I'm sure I hav'nt said she did," said Mr. Spildin quite crest fallen.

"You hav'nt said it father, but you've let it out, that's worse---it has a worse effect on one's mind," said the impertinent boy watching his loved---though not respected father, out of a piece of one eye, and thoroughly enjoying the effect of his words.

"I've let it out, Tom," said Mr. Spildin, in the exact kind of voice and manner which inferred that he had been very naughty, but was sorry for it---"don't take advantage of me---it was to please you that I began, and I didn't think---Tom, there's a good fellow, now don't tell your mother that I said we run away!"

"I won't," said Tom.

"Well," said the father, "your mother liked him, but she heard he was the worst of characters out of his business, and she refused him for that cause. They were so angry at her not marrying him, for they wer'n't rich

and he was, that---that they tormented her to death, and one day I went in, and found her crying, and I asked her once more to have me, Tom, and she said---

"What, what?" asked Tom, impatient at the pause.

"That *she would have me!* for she said that though I was little, I was good!"

And the tears stood in the eyes of the little artist, as he remembered that day---so many years before.

"Her parents wouldn't hear of it," said Mr. Spildin, "and so to get her out of all the troubles, Tom, we run away."

"And what became of him?" asked Tom.

"He soon married her sister; I believe to spite my wife," said Mr. Spildin, "and a miserable thing it was, that marriage---he turned out so bad."

"Did he?" said Tom with great curiosity, "and my aunt died?"

"No---he died luckily," said the artist, "and your aunt married that good fellow, Jones."

"I never knew aunt Jones had been married before!"

"I dare say not, he made us all so wretched we were glad to forget him---when we could," said Spildin.

"I called upon aunt Jones to-day," said Tom, "and heard some news--"

"What?" asked the father.

"They've let their drawing-rooms at last," said Tom, "aunt was quite pleased, she said she never saw a prettier couple than they are, and that it was lucky they had come to her, they were so innocent: they'd never know when they were cheated---you might put both your hands into his pocket, and he'd never find it out!"

"You didn't hear the name," said Mr. Spildin in an indifferent tone of voice.

"Oh yes, I did---it was ;---hum---it was a short name too ;" and Tom gazed with such intensity at the cat that she got up from her comfortable attitude under a false impression that he had something for her. "Ah yes,"

continued Tom, "it was a Mr. and Mrs. Keane."

"Your mother was glad when she saw what a husband he turned out, that she had not married him herself---oh, that she was," continued Mr. Spildin.

"I dare say," said Tom whose mind, during the whole of this long history, had been comparing his father's love matters with his own, "but now, I want to ask you your advice; that man was handsome and rich you say, and yet you cut him out."

"I did," said Mr. Spildin.

"Now, do you think as to James Williams father; *do* you think that *I*, could cut *him* out?"

Before Mr. Spildin could reply, a knock at the door announced the return of his wife, and Sophy.

They had been calling upon Mrs. Jones; and they too had heard her praises of her new lodgers...Mr. and Mrs. Keane; the good woman had become quite fond of them already...she said they were "such dears."

Horace Leigh had indeed established the helpless pair in a lodging remarkable for its neatness, till they could—or rather till he could fix their plans ; it was a strange page in his history that the plans of Fred *and Isabelle*—could now *amuse* him. They were so ludicrously helpless, such pretty innocent children, so very ignorant of the world, and their married life spent in hotels where they had nothing to do but *to pay*, had cost them much money though they had failed to buy experience. Mrs. Jones told Mrs. Spildin in confidence that “they reminded her, poor dears, in London, of nothing but the Babes in the Wood ;” and Mrs. Spildin who did not exactly see the correctness of the remark, sarcastically enquired,

“If Mrs. Jones considered herself a Rob-bin !” which new pun elicited a variety of frightful laughs from her exulting husband.

Along the busy streets of London walked Frederick Keane, dangling his cane in an idle, helpless kind of way, glancing in at

all the shop windows, wondering at the changes in the fashions since he last left England—using his little pet exclamations, of which he had as many as a woman, to himself, as he gazed in child-like surprise, at all the novelties ; till taken prisoner by his astonishment he involuntarily stopped at a shop window. The street was crowded, and the people swept past him, as he stood in the most favorable situation that can be imagined for having his pocket picked.

Standing there, thinking whether he should enter and purchase, he took out his handkerchief ; something in his pocket rather resisted its extraction, but with a slight jerk he succeeded in taking it out. Returning it to his pocket...making up his mind not to buy the tempting articles, he walked idly on ; and yet he was bent upon important business...the sauntering and gazing Fred : for he was taking to Mr. Toulmin the papers which Mr. Simmons had confided to his care.

Mrs. Frederick Keane was sitting in the pretty drawing-room of her comfortable lodging, ordering dinner of Mrs. Jones, and taking her advice on sundry points of house-keeping.

Mrs. Jones was very like her sister Mrs. Spildin; comely, clever, and good-natured; the inexperienced pair had fallen into good hands.

Just then Fred literally rushed into the room in a state of great excitement; his handsome face was flushed, and his countenance showed marks of great annoyance, not to say fright.

"Isabelle, you never gave me your father's papers...you let me go without them!"

"Indeed," replied his wife, astonished at being thus accused, "don't you recollect I found them for you, gave them to you when you *were* going away without them? you must remember that!"

"I do," said the dejected Fred..."I do!"

"What is the matter?" anxiously enquired Isabelle.

"I have lost them," answered Fred. "When I got to Mr. Toulmin's and had explained how I received the papers, I put my hand into my pocket, and they were not there. I looked just like a fool! and came running home, hoping to find them here."

"You took them, Fred," said Isabelle, reproachfully.... "They were of such importance to my father."

"They must have picked my pocket, for my handkerchief is gone," replied Keane, in a piteous tone.

"Oh, Fred, how *could* you lose such things?" said Isabelle.

"How could I help it?" answered Fred.

"What can we do...we must try something; shall I ring for Mrs. Jones?" said Isabelle; for with a helplessness equal to her husband's she had more good sense.

"No...no," said Fred, quite cross with his despair; "I must ask Horace Leigh, of course."

"Oh, do," said Isabelle...The days when

that name caused her to frown were over now.

“Are you quite sure I did not leave them here?” said Fred, willing to throw the blame, if possible, on any one but himself.

“*You know* I gave the papers to you, with your handkerchief,” replied his wife, in a half indignant tone. She knew so well it was no fault of hers.

“Then I must go to Horace,” answered Fred. “How I wish, Isabelle, that we had never seen that fellow Simmons!”

To this very unnecessary attempt to throw the blame on Mr. Simmons, Isabelle made no answer; but it rather mitigated the annoyance she had felt at his accusing her again of having them still there.

And Fred, with a very crest-fallen face, walked quickly off to the chambers of Horace Leigh.

The door was opened by James Williams, and Fred was ushered in.

Horace, with great good-nature, instantly

left off the business of consequence on which his mind had been seriously engaged, for he saw by the anxious face of his friend that something more than usually annoying had occurred.

“Horatio, I am in a scrape, and you must get me out of it...as usual,” said Keane, with perfect gravity.

“What now?” said Horace.

“I forgot to tell you yesterday, in all the pleasure of a first meeting, that at some horrid place upon the Rhine, where there was a thunder-storm, I met with Simmons, the fellow that has almost ruined Sir Josiah; and though I know he is a humbug, I was fool enough to take charge of some papers which he said he had had by him all this time—without knowing it;...do you believe that?”

“What?” asked Horace, in quiet ridicule of Fred’s involved style of explaining things...“believe what?...that Sir Josiah is ruined? that you are fool enough? or that Simmons is a humbug?”

“ Ah, that’s just your old way of teasing me,” said Fred ; “ you always know what I mean, even...”

“ If *you* don’t,” replied Horace.

“ Oh, you have puzzled me, and put me out,” said Keane...his intellectual faculties had been kept bright in some degree by constant collision with Leigh and Blanche in former days, but since his marriage they were less bright than ever...they had been rusting fast.

“ Well...now I have it; Simmons gave me some papers for Sir Josiah’s lawyer; and I took them this morning...”

“ Well ?” said Horace Leigh.

“ And...I have lost them,” answered Fred....“ Papers of consequence!...I think they picked my pocket...What am I to do ?”

“ Advertise,” answered his friend. “ You may...most likely will—recover them.”

“ Thank you, old fellow,” said Keane ; “ Isabelle will be so obliged to you.”

And Horace wrote out the advertisement.

“ Were the papers directed, Fred ?”

“ Yes,” replied he, “ to Mr. Toulmin.”

“ Indeed !” exclaimed Horace ; “ well, I think you have every chance of finding them again by offering a good reward. And now, my dear fellow, I am very sorry to turn you out, but I am so particularly engaged this morning that I really have no time for amusement ; and besides the sooner this is put in the better.” And he handed him the advertisement.

“ Well, well—I’m going,” said Fred. “ A thousand thanks ; but I must say I envy you...I wish *I* wasn’t married.”

“ Why ?” enquired Horace, coldly.

“ I shouldn’t have had this bother !” said the helpless Fred.

The young Keanes waited anxiously all the next day for the effect to be produced by the proffered reward. Fred went towards evening to enquire at Mr. Toulmin’s if any one had brought the papers there.

They waited another day...and then gave up all hope.

They were very sorrowful...both of them rather cross ; for now indeed they felt that Fred *had* lost the packet.

CHAPTER VII.

HORACE LEIGH had been too busy to enter upon the subject with Fred, but he did not doubt that the lost parcel contained the papers they had so anxiously wished for; provoking and vexatious as it was, serious and disastrous as it might become if they could not be recovered; Horace could not resist a smile...it was so like that poor, dear Fred to lose the packet!

After two or three days Mr. Leigh went

to call upon the Keanes. As the door was opened for him, Mrs Spildin and Sophy were just coming out, and as the light fell on the young girl's face he knew her, and spoke a few kind words, although it was to her he owed the loss of his inheritance, if there had been a will.

Sophy turned deadly pale and shrank away from him. She believed that she had injured him for life, and to know that by the same unfortunate circumstance she had deferred her own marriage for years, perhaps for life, had been to her as it were an atonement for her involuntary fault; for she believed that there *had been* a will.

Horace gained nothing from his visit but the knowledge, that the advertisement had not been answered.

Greatly disappointed, and perplexed at this most unlucky loss, he knit his brows anxiously as he walked home. He was the junior council in the case; it was soon coming on, and the important link in the chain of evidence, which would probably clear Sir

Josiah of any partnership in the liabilities which Mr. Simmons had incurred by the swindling of Robbs & Co.—this link had been found...*and lost.*

It was these liabilities which kept Sir Josiah Walgrave abroad; the actual losses from their joint speculations might be got over; they were great, certainly, but not overwhelming; and Sir Josiah, living in a foreign country, where nothing suited him in any way, had often solaced himself with the fond hope of returning to England, and not only recovering by degrees from the loss of his floating capital, but still...and in spite of all...making a fortune!...to be shared with Simmons. It would have been well for that unfortunate man if he could also have indulged in any such delightful dreams.

Return to England Sir Josiah might in sober and plain reality, if Horace Leigh could gain his cause. With the lost papers there was a chance, a possibility of this. Without them, not a hope.

Horace would give much to do a service of such magnitude to Isabelle...it would be a great, noble revenge!...it would show her the man she had *forgotten*, to say the least of her strange conduct ; but of this honourable revenge he had been deprived by the same man who had deprived him of her love.

Another wound from the unconscious hand of Fred !

Another bitter day.

Then, could he but help to gain for his client such an important cause, how it would add to that professional name and reputation, for which he thirsted as some men thirst for pleasure, or for gold ; it was the only thing he had to look to, the only thing in which he had not been flung back and cruelly disappointed, and now ! when there was such an opening, when pride and disappointed love, honourable ambition, all might be gratified ; when he knew, with the just feeling of confidence in his own tried ability, that he wanted only a foundation ; give him but

that and he could raise success...the chance, the certainty of all this had been destroyed by the foolish carelessness of Fred.

Nothing remained to him but man's real sphere...Ambition, and there too he had been checked...he asked himself:

“What had he left to him on earth?”

And the colour mounted to his broad forehead and it rested there, and the contracted brow relaxed, and a smile sweet as a child's parted the lips that had been even painfully compressed; and one name came to his lips in the music of which there was *as yet* no discord, the name which had to him a sweeter sound than any in the world was—Grace, and upon that his fervent affection breathed a deep and heart-felt blessing ...it is so completely the instinct of real love to ask a blessing for the one we love.

And he had nothing left on earth but Grace?

“Horace, I have been looking for you everywhere,” said a young man.

In the depths of his reverie, Horace had

not seen him, but a friendly hand grasped his, and affectionate eyes met his, and the disappointed man felt he was not alone in this weary world...whilst he had such a friend as Stephen Forrester.

"I say Tom, what shall we do with ourselves down at your aunt Stock's?" said Mr. Spildin to his son as they walked, with their odd gait, so alike in both that it was quite absurd, down the most crowded streets in London.

"I don't know!" said Tom, "I shan't do anything; it's my holiday...but you can sketch, father."

"Not I!" replied *the artist*.

"Well, I shall do one thing," continued Tom upon reflection; "I shall fish; the miller's very civil to me since you did the painting of his mill."

"Ah," answered Mr. Spildin, "I did that; although I never draw from Nature."

"You thought the mill a work of art—not nature;" answered Tom with a satirical glance towards his father, intercepted on its

way round to him, by a shop window. A moment more and Tom was gazing with astonishment at the beautiful "fashions," which the shop displayed.

"Come on, Tom," said his father, "we shall be too late ; you know the coach starts punctual ; hallo ! what's this ?" continued Mr. Spildin, and Tom's keen eyes, directed by his father, saw on the ground close at his feet ...a paper parcel...small and compact ; it was reposing in the mud, the crowd had been so great that they were the first who had found *time to see it*.

Tom picked it up, and in a disappointed tone exclaimed,

"It is directed...only so blotted with the mud that I can't read the name."

"Come on, *Tom*, we shall miss the coach," said Mr. Spildin in a frightened voice as a clock near them chimed the quarter before the fated hour—we have such a long way to walk."

"The parcel father ? what shall we do with that ?" said Tom.

"We must make it out by and bye, Tom, we aint a going off with it...to Amerika are we sir?" said Mr. Spildin with the dignity of innocence; "answer me that sir! and come along *do*."

And Tom, whose arm had been seized by the impatient little artist, walked on energetically, looking at the little parcel which he held in his hand and feeling he didn't know why, as if it concerned him some how or other. Tom had his presentiments quite as much as the imaginative Grace.

"I wonder what is in it," mused Tom.

"It aint much use a wondering," said Mr. Spildin philosophically; and taking it out of Tom's hand he too tried to make out the direction, but could not decipher it for mud and wet.

"We shall have to send this parcel to the washerwoman before we can make anything of it," observed Mr. Spildin smiling, under the impression that it was a joke, "if one could but make it out, one might leave it at the coach office, but as one can't..."

“ One *can't*,” said Tom settling the matter.

The Spildins, father and son, had paid their visit of a week to Mrs. Stock, and had returned in safety, when Tom, on the morning after his arrival, brought down with him the parcel he, or rather his father, had discovered. Tom kicked the cat, gave little John a cuff for being in his way, after the well-known fashion of the wolf complaining of the lamb, gave his mother an affectionate hug after the manner of a bear...gave Sophy, as he always did, a few looks of mingled affection and reproach, and then sat down to breakfast with a gigantic appetite.

“ I say father, *as I found it*—I had better take the parcel.”

This was a deliberate piece of undutifulness on the part of the tiresome boy.

“ *You, sir!*” said Mr. Spildin in an accent of concentrated contempt.

“ I,” answered Tom in a mild but determined tone.

“ You are, without exception,” exclaimed the artist in a rage, “ the most provoking

boy that ever father had the misfortune to own...you aggravate me, *and you know it.*"

Tom caught a look of serious reproof from his mother, and from Sophy; and so, placed as it were between two fires, even he hung down his head, ashamed.

"Ever since, my dear," explained Mr. Spildin to his wife, "ever since *I* found that parcel...that boy is always a-saying it was *he*—arguing it out—"

"In your own way," whispered the Imperturbable.

"Putting me out," said Mr. Spildin, "and if you wer'nt as big as I am...I should..."

He didn't say what.

"So you're a going to take it, sir, yourself," said Tom, "although I was the one to—"

"Hold your tongue," said the irate little man, "you know that I can't take it."

"Well, then I must," said Tom, coolly taking up the parcel, "as I've nothing else

to do...the mud is off, and one can read now what is written on it."

The parcel was directed to Mr. Toulmin's office, and Tom read out the name.

About two hours after this the excellent and clever old lawyer was sitting busy at his work when a clerk announced : " That a young man had called with a parcel for him."

" Bring it," said Mr. Toulmin.

" He won't give it into any hands but yours, sir," said the clerk.

" Tell him he *must* give it to you, I'm busy."

Presently the clerk returned from his errand, and though it had been unsuccessful there was such a look of extreme hilarity on the parchment face of the usually grave messenger, that Mr. Toulmin felt some little surprise.

" Well," said he impatiently.

But the clerk was engaged for the moment in a violent effort to keep his countenance.

“ He won’t, sir, give it to any one but you,” said the unlucky man, whose gravity had been quite upset by the absurdities of the “ comical young man ” whose jokes had been amusing him, and whose impertinence was now about to procure him an interview with the head of the firm.

It was of course no other than Tom himself, who had assured the clerk amongst other speeches :

“ That it was no use bringing messages to *him*, for that he should and would see the old boy.”

“ Show him in,” said Mr. Toulmin.

And Tom, with his queer figure, and his quaint, clever face, stood twirling his hat before him.

“ This parcel, sir, directed to you was found by me, or my father, buried in the mud this day week.”

“ Why didn’t you bring it before ?” said Mr. Toulmin, sharply.

“ In the first place, sir, the coach was waiting for us, and...necessity has no law...

and so on," added Tom, forgetting himself quite.

"Why didn't you leave it in London... why keep it a week?" said the lawyer.

"I think I said we found it in the mud--- till it had been washed carefully and dried we couldn't read the name," said Tom.

"And not easily then," said Mr. Toulmin, gazing at the direction which had been so hastily written by Mr. Simmons in the little skylight room at Nymequen whilst Fred and Isabelle waited outside for it, and the steamer was waiting for its hour and them.

"I wonder you could make it out at all, really very ingenious."

And Tom bowed with such a respectful *mein*, and looked so surprised withal that he should think anything of *that*, that Mr. Toulmin looked at him with his shrewd eyes and wondered who he was.

There was nothing vulgar or commonplace in Tom, queer as he was, unless he chose it.

Meanwhile Mr. Toulmin had hastily opened the packet, and finding it really was the one

Horace Leigh had mentioned to him as found and lost, the very one that Fred had dropped in taking out his handkerchief in the street, when standing at the shop window, the fascinations of which had led to its being found by the Spildins; he turned to Tom, and said "This parcel contains papers of importance, and you are fully entitled to the reward.

"Reward, sir!" answered Tom with an unmistakeable accent of extreme astonishment.

"Didn't you know it had been advertised," said Mr. Toulmin, "here are the five guineas offered as the reward."

"Five guineas!" said Tom, then adding to himself, "I shan't be able to say *I* found it...ever again."

He said this in such a tone of regret that the lawyer thought there was something wrong, and said sharply and severely,

"What do you mean, young man...did you *not* find the parcel."

"I always said I did...when there was nothing to be got by it," said Tom.

"Who did then...what is all this about—what *trick* is this?" said Mr. Toulmin looking suspicious.

"No trick!" said Tom, drawing his little figure up, and looking strait at Mr. Toulmin with his keen and honest face, turned boldly up.

"My father and I were together---I picked it up---he saw it first, I always said I did, just for a joke---but when I found there *was* something to be got by having found it---I was sorry, I must give up my joke."

Tom saw that his unguarded expression had excited doubts which must be cleared up, and there was a queer turn in his great, ugly mouth and a twinkle in those odd little eyes of his, which the observing lawyer read aright, and he was satisfied.

"Well, as you must give your father the reward, and must also lose your joke, here is another sovereign for yourself---the papers

are of vast importance," continued he in a low voice excusing his generosity as it were, to himself.

There was a manly gratitude in the way in which Tom accepted this donation, which was to him immense, which pleased the lawyer ; he was apt to take fancies, with all his worldly prudence ; yet he had never been deceived : his last fancy had been for Horace Leigh.

" And so, young man, what are you ?" said Mr. Toulmin abruptly stopping him as he was going, after making his awkward bow, to leave the room.

" Nothing, just now," said Tom ; " I have been a copying clerk, in Mr. Pounder's office."

" Why did you leave ?"

" I had outgrown the place."

And the lawyer's lip involuntarily curled, Tom was so very short ; he saw the expression, and smiled too.

" I had out-grown my work—in age," said

Tom; "my father's looking out for something better."

"*Hum,*" said Mr. Toulmin, and his hums, always meant good to somebody.

"Why didn't they promote you in the office?"

"The place above me, sir, was filled; *well* filled, sir, by my friend," said the eccentric Tom, in a tone of feeling.

"Hum:—will Pounder give you a good recommendation?"

"I think so, sir," said Tom; "I hope so—honesty and handwriting—unexceptionable," and he made his queer bow.

"Abilities?—doubtful, I suppose," said Mr. Toulmin, reading the certainty of them too plainly for an error, in his face—but amusing himself, with seeing what he would answer.

"I should be too happy...if you would *ascertain* their extent," said Tom, with a mixture of boldness and modesty, seeing the drift of all these questions, seeing to a hair's breadth, how far he might go.

"*I will*," said Mr. Toulmin ; " ring that bell."

The clerk profoundly amazed at the length of the interview between his formidable master, and the "Comical young man,"—quickly appeared.

" Send Taylor here."

And Tom stood there, his heart beating fast, and his cheeks crimson, with excitement.

" Taylor," said the lawyer, " we want another clerk in Joliffe's place---speak to this young man, and if his recommendations are good--- will bear every strict enquiry---let him have Joliffe's place....Good morning."

" Spildin," suggested the delighted Tom.

" Good morning, Spildin...we shall meet again...I have no doubt."

Having satisfied the very accurate and particular Mr. Taylor, till farther enquiries could be made...Tom walked off in a perfect frenzy of happiness, at having got a

situation for himself. There was always a curious mixture in his head—what with his father's peculiar phraseology...his own every day, clear headed, business conversations, and his poetical readings and writings ...his own ideas often put themselves into very odd and double minded sentences.

“None but the brave deserve...no, no, I don't mean that,” said Tom, to himself; “Faint heart never won...hang fair ladies. If I hadn't been impertinent, and insisted on seeing the old boy, though I hadn't any right to, he wouldn't have taken a fancy to me, and I shouldn't have got a situation, for I have got a situation...for I have got it I know...hurra!” said Tom, “what will become of me; I must kiss somebody...I am so happy...how pleased my own dear mother will be, when she hears it. Ah! there's aunt Jones nodding at me...I'll just go in and tell her.”

These were his thoughts, almost spoken aloud.

Tom had not been sitting with aunt Jones

more than ten minutes, when there came a knock at the door of the drawing-room, where Fred and Isabelle, were quietly sitting.

"Come in," said Fred, who was snipping a pen, for want of any thing to do.

"Oh, ma'am! oh, sir! oh, ma'am," said Mrs. Jones, scarlet with delight.

"What is the matter?" said Isabelle.

"Oh you will be so glad," said the sympathetic landlady.

"What can have happened?" said Fred.

"The packet's found!" said Mrs. Jones, clasping her hands; she had seen so much of the distress, occasioned to the young couple, whom she always designated to her family as, "Her dears," that she was fully aware of the importance of her tidings.

Fred sprang up from his chair.

"Why---you don't say so?"

Isabelle hung her fair head, and tears of joy came into her eyes, as she said in a low voice, knowing from Horace that it

would probably save her father from all his distresses and his exile.

“ Thank God.”

Fred paced the room---Mrs. Jones looked on enchanted, she felt she had a right to be so, if her niece had so greatly injured Horace.

Her nephew had just done an enormous service, to Isabelle.

What a strange chain, link within link.

There was a silence of a moment, broken by Fred, who going up to his wife, said, in an enthusiastic tone...

“ Oh, Isabelle, how jolly !”

“ Yes, ma’am,” said Mrs. Jones—“ my nephew found the packet ; he just came in to tell me ; I knew it must be the same from all that I had heard you say.”

“ Is he here ?” said Fred.

“ Yes, sir.”

“ Then send him up...pray do,” said Fred ;
“ I want to know *where* I dropped the letters.”

And Tom, with his queer face full of *queer-looking* happiness, came up to see the pretty couple he had by chance so greatly served.

"And so you found my packet?" exclaimed Fred.

"My aunt says it is yours," replied the astute Tom; "it was directed to Mr. Toulmin, and *he* says it is *his*!"

"All right," said Fred; "they are ours...*and* his...I had the charge of them."

"*Oh*," said Tom, very coolly, as if he understood it...now.

"Where did I drop it?" eagerly enquired Fred.

"I don't know, sir, I'm sure," said Tom, demurely; seeing that poor, dear Fred's way of putting things was none of the clearest, and wishing to amuse himself.

"Why, dear me," said Fred, "I thought--"

"I know where I *found* it, sir, said the Imperturbable, but it doesn't exactly follow."

“ Bless me,” said Fred to Isabelle, “ the boy weighs his words just like Horatio !”

“ I found it, sir, whilst I was looking in at a window at the corner, sir, of---”

“ Oh, I know, though I don’t remember the name of the street, I do remember taking out my handkerchief, and it would not come, and I pulled it out with a jerk, and the packet must have jerked out into the mud, and---”

“ There I found it,” answered Tom, with a bow ; “ and I’m very happy, ma’am,” said he, addressing Isabelle, *to make her look at him*, “ if I have been in the least degree of any use to you, or yours.”

“ Thank you,” said Isabelle ; “ you cannot estimate the importance to my father.”

“ In point of fact *my* father saw it first, only I’ve got into such a habit of saying *I* found it, that I can’t help saying so.”

“ Then *he* gets the reward we offered,” said Isabelle.

“ I have it here to take to him,” said Tom.

And Isabelle made signs to Fred, and Fred understood, and gave Tom something, hoping he would accept it, which Tom did very condescendingly, and then he bowed and left the room.

Flinging his awkward arms round his aunt Jones' neck, Tom kissed her, and declared---

"This is a lucky day ; I never made so many bows in all my life, no, never, or got so much by them, aunt ! just fancy, two sovereigns, and a situation."

So Tom walked off homewards, still, or indeed more, frantic with delight.

"Poetic temperaments feel these things !" said Tom, striking his heart with his fist, to the astonishment of the passers-by, who thought he was an actor practising. "They feel good luck, they do. Oh, I find that I've never had any but bad luck to feel till now !" and again he gave himself a blow, why, or what for, I fancy no one on earth could tell.

He never had had so much money before

in his life, poor Tom; so he walked wildly home, but not so wildly but that he went into one shop, and two, and three; and when he had told his tale, as wonderful to them as him, Tom brought out a pretty present for his mother, one for dear Sophy, and one for John.

And little John in the delight of his heart took his picture book exultingly, and showed it---to the cat.

CHAPTER VIII.

"FRED, dear," said his pretty wife, a week after their arrival in Town, "Mrs. Jones has brought in the bills; when will you like to pay them?"

"I don't know," said Fred; "what do *you* think?"

"*I* don't know," said Isabelle; "just as you please."

"Why, to tell you the truth, travelling is horrid work, it takes all one's ready

money---at least it has taken mine; I suppose some people have more!"

"I hope so, for their sakes," said Isabelle, in a very low tone, holding down her fair head, then raising it with a look of care.

"And I *do* think," said Fred, brightening up at a happy thought, "that if we took this nice little hole for three months certain, and desired all the bills to be sent in at the end of the quarter, we shouldn't have to pay now!"

Isabelle could not deny that fact, but she shook her head gravely, and observed... "But, Fred, they will come in so heavily all at once."

"Yes, but just think," said Fred, "so many things may happen in three months. Horace may have won the lawsuit for your father, and then we shall have lots of tin."

"Or...Fred...it may be lost!" said Isabelle.

"Oh stuff," replied her husband, "we won't think of that. Let the bills run; in three months I will pay them all somehow."

"But Fred," remonstrated his wife, "we shall know so much better what we are about if we pay them once a month."

"I wont do it," said Fred in an obstinate manner, "so there's an end of it."

To be the friends of Horace Leigh was quite enough to obtain from Mrs. Jones and her tradespeople any amount of credit, so the matter was settled in a few moments.

At the end of three gay and pleasant months in Town, the bills came in; and the examination of them was no pleasant task.

"Confound these fellows, Isabelle, for finding one out so soon, here is the bill for your watch and ring I gave you when we married."

"Not paid for yet," said she in an accent of dismay, "we have been married two years, Fred, or nearly three."

And there sat the poor innocent and helpless Fred—with his hands full of bills!

And there sat his gentle and helpless wife, with *her* hands full of bills.

At last he looked at her, and said, "who

would have thought we could have spent so much...I am afraid you've been extravagant!"

And he handed her some accounts more strictly speaking incurred by her.

Isabelle handed him in silence some of his own; they had been running on for years.

For Fred, when once away from the guidance of his friend, had found it so easy to give orders!

"What SHALL we do," said he, "confound it, but I hav'nt the money!"

Isabelle burst into tears, she had an idea that people who did not pay their bills were always sent to prison—she did not know enough of this world of ours to come to the conclusion that people who have no money often spend the most—"Prison and bread and water for her darling Fred," such were her visions as she sobbed like a young child.

"What *will* you do? oh, Fred!" she said after a time.

"Do?" answered Fred, crushing the bills together in a rage, and walking about the room..."Borrow of Horace Leigh."

“ Oh no ! not that...not that again, that is too dreadful,” and she looked up imploringly ; but then the alternative!...a prison!! ...bread and water ! to her inexperienced mind overcame all delicacy and all fear ; and she got up and walked to Fred, and spoke to him eagerly and earnestly.

“ Oh go to Mr. Leigh at once, and borrow what you can.”

So Isabelle’s imaginary fears brought her to this !

If years before...Horace could have been told she would have said those words, what a whole world of dear romance must have melted away...what sorrow would have been spared to him.

Who can tell what they may be brought to by the force of circumstance ?

So Frederick Keane, leaving his wife in tears, walked off to the well-known chambers of his friend, where he had been so idle and so happy in the old times.

He had something to think of now ! and more ; something to do.

Poor Fred! And yet he did not feel awkward in the least; he had that perfect confidence in the affection of Horace; in his will and power to help him in all emergencies, that a child has in its father...he had no fear whatever of annoying him...no doubt; not the faint shadow of a doubt of the result: and so he walked along rather triumphantly than not, saying as he rang at the door.

“ Oh!--it's all right !”

Horace as usual gave up his work to listen to the troubles of his friend ; he was not in good spirits, the matter of Sir Josiah did not look well in spite of the recovery of the papers.

And Fred explained his errand.

“ I am the most unlucky man in the world---I can't pay my bills !”

Horace looked anxiously at him though he had long thought it must be so.

“ I don't think, upon the whole, that I've managed very well,” continued Fred, in the most innocent manner. “ You see, Horatio, that abroad, I was *obliged* to pay ready money; so I let my old bills, here---before I

married, you know---run on, and kept them quiet by ordering fresh things, and now you see, it has all come upon me at once---and ---I don't know what to do."

Fred's sentences were always so *weak*---sentences and water.

"What is the amount of your debts?---as near as you can tell!" said Horace, beginning in a business like way, and suddenly remembering, who he was speaking to!

Fred mentioned really a large sum.

"And of disposable income just now," asked Horace.

Fred mentioned---not much.

Horace Leigh looked very grave.

But Fred drew his chair nearer his, leant his elbows on the table, placed his handsome, face quite comfortably, at rest on his hands, and addressed his friend, with a calm, confiding look, of absolute certainty in his success.

"I say, Horatio---now do---there's a good fellow, lend me the money."

Fred had seen Horace under circumstances of no ordinary trial, but he never saw him look, as he did now.

The brows of the generous-hearted young barrister were contracted, the firmly closed, determined looking mouth quivered, his eyes had a look of bitter grief, as he replied :

“ How much do you want ?...who can you put off, Fred ?...who will wait ? ”

“ You ask so many questions, all at once, that you confuse me,” said Fred, in a pettish tone. “ Let me see...I can put off...” and he counted upon his idle fingers ; “ one, two, three...yes...hum—I want at least...four hundred pounds.”

“ The —— ! ” answered the most particular and correct man of his day.

“ When can you let me have it ? ” was the next thing, Fred said.

“ I have not such a sum,” said Horace ;
“ I have it not...”

“ Not lend it me ? ” cried Fred, completely taken by surprise ; “ *Horatio ?* ” and the tones of wonder, and almost of indigna-

tion, in which he spoke the words, went far to prove what a friend Horatio had been to him, as yet.

"I cannot, Fred," said the young barrister.

"Will not," replied the suppliant, becoming nothing short of angry, at this most unexpected answer.

"Think...if you can," said Horace, bitterly; "my moderate allowance, suddenly became less...the career I am pursuing cannot be trod, except at great expense...I have made little as yet...my arrears are made up...I am clear, Fred...but I have only a mere income...nothing but hope...to give even to you."

Fred had the faults and failings of a woman, he covered his face...and almost groaned.

"I would borrow, for myself," said Fred, "but...how can I, Horace?" and to his greatly startled friend, he exposed the melancholy state of his poor little affairs...and then he rose...and said :

“Well, thank you, Horace—I know you would have helped me if you could...I need no proofs of that...I must do as I can...but I left poor Isabelle in tears, and dread to tell her, what I have to tell.”

“Isabelle,” said Horace Leigh, in a voice of great feeling; “*Isabelle!*” and her name sounded like a strain of music...heard when we were young and happy, forgotten for a time, and now heard once again.

“Good-bye,” said Fred, in a deeply dejected voice.

There was a struggle in the mind of Horace...it was one of his bitter days, this one...in which he had been forced to refuse comfort and assistance to Fred.

But a hope came across Keane's mind, and his handsome face lighted up again, and he said :

“But, Horace, though Sir Josiah has more than once told me...Bell's allowance is all *he* can give, surely...I may depend on your success...on the cause...you know what I would—”

"You must not lean on that...I fear it is a broken reed," said Horace Leigh.

And Fred again moved to the door, murmuring to himself:

"Poor girl!...poor Isabelle!"

Again that name awoke a thousand tenderesses in the heart of her old lover, awoke a longing to save her from distress and grief at any cost to his own feelings; and the sorrow-stricken aspect of Fred caused the struggle in his mind to cease...pride gave way before affection.

"Fred, I will do that for *you*...which I would not do for any other human being...I will do that for you...which I would not do to save myself from starving...*I will ask Luke for money.*"

And Horace Leigh sat down, almost overcome with the greatness of the effort.

And Fred thanked him and wrung his hand, and said "he was a brick", and when he went home to Isabelle he caught her round the waist, and made her waltz whether she would or no, all out of time...

almost shouting in her ears that it would be
“All right.”

And Horace, to keep up his resolution, would not return to his work till he had written the letter to Luke, so painful, or rather so repugnant, to his feelings.

Luke was sitting after breakfast, instead of walking out as usual to look at his stud—in such a humour that Emily dared not speak to him...when he received that letter,...repeated again and again were the words :

“Never for myself; would I have asked this favour, Luke.”

And he sat there with the request for a loan of four-hundred pounds only; (it was not much to him with his thousands a-year) ...from the disinherited and disappointed brother...in whose place, in whose home he stood as master; and little Mary came playing round him, and he said in a rough voice :

“Get out.”

And the terrified little child crept away. He had always been gentle to her.

And Luke clenched his right hand fiercely, and pronounced many deep oaths in a low voice...for he had voluntarily promised Horace to help him if he should want assistance...and now it had been asked:

And Luke could not help thinking how well, how generously Horace had behaved to him, and the thought worked its way into his heart, and produced *more oaths*.

And then Luke Leigh walked about the room, and Emily came in to ask him to go to a ball, and saw at a glance this was no time even to speak to him...and left the room again without a word...and Luke looked savagely at her and said nothing.

Then there was a ring at the hall bell, and a servant told him Mr. Browning was waiting in the library, and his master answered fiercely :

“ Let him wait.”

And the man gladly slunk away, and told the first of the servants whom he encountered :

“ Master was very bad, to-day.”

There was not one of the household, mistress or child, who was not terribly afraid of Luke when he was in one of these fierce moods of his.

And Luke made Mr. Browning wait... made them all wait, though one name after another, "upon business," was announced, whilst he wrote to Horace :

" MY DEAR HORACE,

" If it had been for yourself that you had asked the loan of four-hundred pounds---to my own brother, under our peculiar circumstances, I could not have refused the sum however difficult I might find it to raise the money ; but as you avowedly and repeatedly declare in your letter it is not for yourself---I cannot, and will not put myself to such great inconvenience as I should at this moment feel, in lending that sum---I will not put myself out for anybody else though I would for you.

"You will see, and believe that I myself am by no means at ease, as I am about to mortgage.

"I am your affectionate brother

"LUKE LEIGH."

He sealed his letter, and joined the party in the library. Before he left it, for a wild gallop over the country, he had mortgaged the best farm on the Leigh estate.

Mr. Browning rode away in a state of great astonishment at the swift way in which his greatly disliked client was progressing on the road to ruin; an extraordinary mixture of extravagance and bad management were doing wonders towards the destruction of his property, and the old lawyer shrugged his shoulders, and looked quite piteous as he thought,

"How different everything would have been if this fine property had fallen into the hands of Horace Leigh!"

And the man of parchments and money matters sighed; as if it had been a personal disappointment to himself.

Horace worked away in his chambers and was obliged to start upon the circuit before the answer arrived...strange to say his confidence had equalled that of Fred, and he also had no doubt as to the result.

The letter followed him, and gave a shock to his feelings...a refusal; he had subjected himself to a refusal of money from Luke...there was a bitter thought! then Luke had made an excuse out of *his* letter; if he had not been so anxious to save his own pride, in the eyes of Luke, Fred might have been saved from his real and pressing embarrassments.

There was no comfort whatever for the mind of Horace, let him look at it in what light he would.

When Frederick Keane found the morning was actually arrived on which he might reasonably hope to get a letter from Horace, his delight really knew no bounds...Isabelle

did not know what to do with him, his spirits were quite outrageous.

“The impertinence of that fellow,” exclaimed he, “waiting in the hall yesterday, and declaring he wouldn’t go till he had seen me...I’ll *pay* him to day! see if I don’t!” said Fred in a revengeful tone, as if he hoped to punish him famously.

And they listened for the postman’s knock, and it came; and Fred ran down like a schoolboy, and held the letter, which he had himself taken from the postman, high over Isabelle’s head, that she might not be able to reach or read it...he had not read it himself.

But when he did, a change came o’er the spirit of his dream, and he saw nothing but the words which Isabelle read over his shoulder.

“Luke will not lend me the money.”

Poor creatures, they were to be pitied, Fred and his pretty wife; they had not energy enough of character to keep out of difficulties, or strength of mind enough to bear them, when they came...they were gay

and harmless butterflies fitted only for the summer days.

After a little while they read the rest of the letter just received from Horace, it was full of good and sage advice, which they were almost incapable of following...one thing being simple and easy, was, however, immediately acted upon.

Horace advised Fred to go and lay his affairs plainly and clearly (if he could) before the experienced Mr. Toulmin, and he did not doubt that he would extricate him in the best manner practicable from his present troublesome embarrassments, and perhaps enable him to go on better plans, for the future.

There was enclosed in this letter of advice a cheque of fifty pounds...it was all that Horace had at that moment to spare.

"Toulmin!" said Fred, "I've heard that name somewhere before."

"Why Fred...*the papers* were directed to him," said Isabelle reproachfully.

“Ah! true,” said Fred, “I do forget so stupidly.”

And he did as he was desired, and Mr. Toulmin listened to the pecuniary embarrassments, great on a small scale, but as Fred's income was derived from solid sources, the difficulties were by no means insuperable, the tangled skein was gradually disengaged ...the son-in-law of Sir Josiah Walgrave had a claim upon his special attention and received it fully. It was rather a curious link in the chain which seemed to bind the Spildin family up, with all the interests of Horace and his friends, that the clerk who had most to do in the matter of Frederick Keane, was no other than the really clever and useful Tom...who took occasion therefrom to boast with some slight approximation to the truth to his aunt Jones, that “They would do very well for that HE was managing the affairs of *“her Dears !”*”

Meanwhile Luke Leigh for the first time in his life felt sorry that he had not done a kindness...felt a species of remorse even

difficult as it would have been, that he had not complied with the request of his brother ---the many good qualities---the truth, the uprightness of Horace were winning respect and affection even from the cold and callous Luke---it was really a triumph.

CHAPTER IX.

BLANCHE was married ; and Horace Leigh soon afterwards went down for a few days to see his mother. Ever since the death of the poor old squire nothing could induce the broken-hearted wife to leave the Leigh even for a day...it was hallowed ground to her.

The visits to his mother were always sad to the good and dutiful son, for though she now evidently cared for him more than she had done, it was equally apparent that Luke was still her idol.

But this time the poor old widow had complaints to make of him; and as they sat there quietly, after their early dinner, Mrs. Leigh enquired—

“When will you see your brother?”

“I am going from hence to High Elms,” answered Horace.

“Will you tell Luke to write?...he never writes,” said the old lady, sadly.

“Emily is your correspondent, I suppose?” cheerfully answered Horace.

“She was,” said Mrs. Leigh; “but lately I have scarcely heard, and then she says she is so busy...tells me of balls and partners;...what are balls to me!” said the old lady; “I don’t know what is come to Emily!”

Horace knew very well.

“And Horace,” continued his mother, “can you attend a little to the people here? And the old place is getting, they tell me, quite out of order.”

“I *cannot* interfere with Luke,” said the

younger brother, with great and grave decision.

“ People are always coming to me about this and that ; it is more than I am equal to,” said the broken-hearted old lady, in a feeble voice.

“ I am sorry for it, dear mother ; you must write to Luke.”

“ I have...so many times,” said Mrs. Leigh. “ He will not attend to matters here ; cannot you tell him he should come, or at least write. People complain. And Horace, as you are going to High Elms, and as Luke never now comes near me...it is very dull, certainly, *now...do* you think, Horace, you could just hint that I have not received, for nine or ten months, the allowance he promised me ; I cannot do without it—indeed I cannot. Luke has forgotten, I am sure ; but I dare not mention it myself. I do not think that Luke is *quite* so kind and thoughtful *as he was before he married* ! it must be that ; married men of course think of their wives. You are atten-

tive, my dear boy, but *you* are not married. Ah! that makes the difference—yes, yes... that's it."

And Mrs. Leigh murmured the last words to herself, *trying to believe them.*

Horace said nothing; but there was evidence enough that Luke did not attend to any of his duties at the Leigh.

Everything that required attention or outlay on the part of Luke was, as the old servants informed Horace, going to wreck and ruin; and the once rich and independent Mrs. Leigh of Leigh having been left to the tender mercies of her eldest son, had been suffering daily and hourly vexation from his want of punctuality in the performance of his pecuniary engagements to her, his mother!

Horace was very sorrowful, but he could do nothing.

As far as Luke's affairs went he was helpless; but before he left his mother, he had pressed on her acceptance a cheque...to buy a new pony-carriage he had said, but

he well knew what would be its real destination.

The money won laboriously by the young barrister paid the accounts—incurred upon the *promises* of Luke.

Then Horace went to High Elms, drawn there by fascinations that were becoming to him truly irresistible.

He found the charming Major Brandon gone ; the regiment had moved on to distant quarters, and for this the anxious brother-in-law of the gay and childish Emily was truly thankful.

She had kept her promise to him, angrily, but perseveringly ; she had withdrawn herself from the attentions of the bewitching militaire...“ She lost so much amusement !”

Day after day Horace Leigh found his way to the Forresters ; he had always something or other to say to...Stephen !

But his footsteps had a perverse inclination to go towards the private entrance to their grounds, and that brought him across the lawn, and past the windows of the

drawing-room...and he was privileged to stop before them, and enquire if Stephen was at home...of Grace, and Grace never knew, but always said she would ask; but it was generally some time before she could contrive to reach the bell-rope. Horace always said he could wait; and so he did—often...a long...no, a *short* time!

And sometimes Stephen from his study, heard their voices, and knew that they must want him---very much!---and though he knew Horace, his friend, could come so often only to see *him*---although he heard their voices on the lawn, he never went to to them!

It was strange, certainly, but Stephen Forrester, was putting in practice, a great virtue, a good and great principle of action, which if it were carried out by all, would make far less of sin and sorrow in the world, than now exists.

“He did as he would be done by!”

But he was selfish too---there is said to be no action done, or left undone, except from *selfish* motives, however good they seem. And Stephen Forrester was very selfish, for if he had a wish in the world, it was that Horace Leigh should marry his sweet sister Grace. She was a beautiful and fascinating creature making the sunshine of his home, but on the whole she was *too much for him!*

She was so brilliant a creature, that like the sun, and a poor fire---she put him out.

A man sometimes does not mind being eclipsed by his wife, she is his property and he is proud of so bright a gem, but to be outshone by a sister, is not so very pleasant.

And when Stephen fancied a mistress to his house, who would not be able to marry and leave him! as Grace would---of course; ---he fancied a gentler, quieter, more docile creature, than Grace---she *was too much for him!*

But she would just suit Horace ; no one could see them together, and not be convinced of that.

No one was so feelingly alive to the fact as the disappointed heir of High Elms.

“ If he had but been master there---If there had *but been a will*.---If Mrs. Vernon had but---remembered him--had but kept her word,---how different would have been his position now.”

But Horace was becoming more and more desperately in love, every hour he spent with Grace---he met with no discouragement---but in her whole manner, he saw she loved him,

Grace was tremblingly happy, for she felt yet a few days, and he must say what she longed, and yet dreaded to hear.

Horace Leigh remembered he had delayed too long---in the old times---(happily for himself he now felt it to be) but to delay now---would be madness: to lose her---would indeed be misery.

And he went to dine at High Elms---the

Forresters were dining out in the neighbourhood, and he was not sorry to have a few hours for reflection.

But he was too happy---far---to think. One day more, and his fate would be decided. Horace Leigh was not one to hope too much, or to flatter himself too much, but he *had* hope for the morrow.

And Grace Forrester rose the next morning, with a flushed cheek, and a beating heart, for she felt---though she could scarcely have said why---that it was to be a day, full of events to her ; there had been a deep meaning in the expressive face, a deep, devotion in the manner of Horace Leigh, which convinced her, serious and earnest, honorable and upright, as she knew his nature to be, that the day could not pass by, without some explanation.

It was with great, but suppressed agitation, that she saw him slowly walking across the lawn---he must be in deep thought, to move with that slow step. Grace sat at her work, where she could see him---and she

had no power to move, though she would have given the world to fly to her own room and so escape, what she felt must be a decisive interview with the only man she ever *could* have cared for.

But he came up to the window, with his slow step---she did not look up---she did not see his face---

It was not the face of a hopeful wooer, certainly ; but real love has more fears than hopes.

At last Grace said, without looking up :

“ Stephen is gone out for the day to-----”

She did not finish her sentence.

Horace had walked up to her, had taken a seat---the one he called of late---his place---close at her side, and still they did not speak.

At last, low and trembling was the tone, in which he said---

“ Miss Forrester---Grace!---I had looked forward to this day---but---the same wretch-

ed fate pursues me---I must leave you---years perhaps must pass, before I can again---enter your presence---if then---but I dare not hope---I am come---Grace, Grace!---I am come *to bid you farewell!*”

Grace Forrester did not look up...she was as it were turned to stone...there was a strange noise in her ears overpowering all real sounds, and when she did look up—Horace was gone.

Fortunately Stephen was indeed out for the day, but he returned in time for a ball in the neighbourhood...in time to go.

But Grace had retired to her room, and to his great astonishment, sent him word by her maid she was not equal to the exertion of going with him.

All this must be explained; it was indeed a mystery...such unjustifiable conduct on the part of Horace, to retreat so late---yet had Grace known the cause she would, perhaps, have loved him even more than ever.

It will be remembered, that Horace the

evening before the short but painful interview just recorded, had dined at High Elms and alone.

After dinner Luke, in his way, had laughed at his brother.

"Ah, Horace, I always thought you were a clever fellow and knew what you were about...not doing much I daresay at the bar---no young fellows ever do ; but I must say---now really I do give you credit."

"I don't know in the least what you are aiming at," said Horace.

"Oh, no!" said Luke, "of course you don't---when a young fellow nearly penniless, as you are, makes up, as you do, to a fortune ---he never knows what he's about of course," and the rough master of High Elms sneered.

"If you mean Miss Forrester," said Horace, rising indignantly, "her attractions would, I should think, shield any man who loves her, from the suspicion of *mere mercenary motives*."

"Not if he is poor," sneered Luke.

And the arrow struck home.

What had Horace Leigh to offer to the heiress ?

A mere subsistence, and professional *prospects* !

“ Well, I must say,” said Luke, exultingly, his small nature delighting in annoyance, “ *I* wouldn’t have married, to live on my wife’s money !”

And in this state of things what motive could be powerful enough to induce Horace Leigh to attend a ball ?

He had no fear that Grace would be there ; one glance at her face---taken hurriedly as he left her---forbade the very idea.

He wished he could forget the pale cheek, and paler lip of the brilliant Grace ; for he felt they were his doing.

After what Luke had said, he could not, would not propose to her as yet, till he had more wealth to offer, and by that time ? He shrank at the idea, for he could not suppose she would remain single for him.

And in this mood he was going to a ball,

he was indeed in no fit humour for such scenes of thoughtless mirth---what motive could be sufficient to take him to a ball !

Major Brandon was to be there, and the state of undisguised delight into which the intelligence had thrown the pretty Emily, determined Horace on being at his post... Luke would not go himself, and Horace felt he should not be doing his duty to a thoughtless young creature, who had no brother, if he staid away.

And Major Brandon came from his distant quarters to the ball...he was on leave, and was going into a distant county.

The pretty Emily had found a new aide-de-camp in one of the new officers; but when the only man, whose absence had ever been a cause of the least regret to her naturally cold heart, returned so unexpectedly; "came back," as he said, "solely to see her", the joy with which she welcomed him was so evident that his triumph knew no bounds; he was intoxicated by his vanity...he had spent the whole morning at

High Elms; about twelve Horace walked through the grounds and entered the room by the open window. Emily was sitting at work, and the handsome young officer was sitting near her. Emily was laughing but she felt her colour deepening fast---from others she could bear the most insidious, or the most open flattery without a change of countenance; but not from him.

The officer bowed haughtily and coldly; but Emily put out her hand with her old smile.

At three o'clock Horace was riding quietly down some shady lanes when, round a corner, he suddenly encountered Emily walking her horse in merry conversation, her companion was Major Brandon.

In the evening Horace entered the ball-room with a lowering brow, there they sat again, his pretty sister-in-law and her admirer; with her head bent down and her fair ringlets shading her blushing cheeks...

observed, remarked and censured, sat his brother's wife.

And Major Brandon did all this because he had a part to play. Vanity is often far stronger in a man than in a woman...and it ruled him, it was his master passion; he had a part to play, it was not love for that fair creature that kept him at her side; but he had come back to the gay circle of that country neighbourhood, with a friend; if he could be called a *friend*, when the only tie between them was a mutual love of amusement; to him in his distant quarters he had spoken of "that pretty Mrs. Leigh," he had boasted of her beauty, he had boasted of her preference...he had brought him down there to see her! he had proved the beauty to the entire satisfaction of his fastidious friend...he had to prove the preference! and it was for that mean triumph to his vanity, that he made her the conversation of the room.

Horace did not dance that night, he was

far too much enraged, far too moody for that; he stood watching, carefully and imperceptibly, his incorrigible sister-in-law, he had better by far have joined in the dancing, for silent and stationary as he was, he overheard much that made the failing of his family rise strong within him.

“That young Mrs. Leigh is the worst flirt I ever saw,” said Lady Adela Mordant who was standing disconsolately with an ugly daughter on each arm; which circumstance had irritated her usually placid temper.

And Horace listened to such remarks as these from passers by, till he could bear it no longer; he could hardly trust himself to speak, lest he should show his anger in his voice; but after much self schooling he went up to Emily and asked her to waltz, hoping by that means to break up the flirtation, which had become so painfully conspicuous.

“Thank you, Horace,” said she looking down, “but I---am tired, I would rather not waltz.”

“Or if she does, she is engaged to me,”

said Major Brandon with a look of triumph, so ill disguised, that Horace turned away quickly, lest he should be no longer able to command himself.

“I must bear it as I can,” said he to himself between his teeth, “that fellow will be gone to-morrow, and he may never come again.”

At supper Horace again offered his services, and his friendly arm was again refused for that of the officer, who when the ball was at a close was still at her side. Horace however was in close attendance also, and as he assisted her into the carriage he heard their parting words.

“Then you promise to be at the concert on Wednesday week.”

“I shall stay here at least a fortnight: longer, if *you* wish it,” replied Major Brandon.

“And I shall be sure to see you to-morrow?”

“Quite certain, I will be with you early,” answered he.

She little thought they should never meet again!

“Good-night, good-night, Horace,” and she turned round upon the officer with a merry childish laugh, and a wave of her little hand which showed how little importance she attached to her evening’s amusement.

But the lamps shone full on Major Brandon’s handsome face; there was a gleam of triumph in his eyes, and Horace saw the look.

The hall was a splendid one separated into divisions by very massive pillars, the ball-room was empty, and nearly all the guests had departed; but Major Brandon and his friend were laughing and talking about Horace, and his ineffectual watchfulness, as they lighted their cigars...they spoke in a low voice and were not within hearing of the servants, but they did not observe that they were not alone...one other gentleman was standing leaning against a pillar close to them, waiting for his carriage which, by some

accident had been detained, and was not even now come to the door.

Major Brandon was flashing his foolish witticisms at the expense of Horace in the ears of his friend, till even *he* thought he was going too far; when suddenly his foolish laugh was silenced, and gave place to a startled "Ha!" as Horace Leigh moved one step and stood before them; a moment more, and the last guest joined the group—it was Stephen Forrester.

* * * * *

Near that old county town is a lonely, wild, and beautiful common, stretching for miles, drest in its varying garb of heath. It was a bright and lovely morning, and the sky was just tinged with the first blush of dawn, when on that common so silent and lonely, though with life so near, stood five young men. Two of them were met for life and death; they were Major Brandon and Horace Leigh.

Words had passed between them, which could have no other result than such a meeting; and without sleep, and almost without a pause, those two passed from the ball-room, where one had been so triumphant, to a meeting from which neither might depart with life. Such are the contrasts in this life of ours; if we are very happy let us beware: misfortune, or it may be death, are at hand.

Major Brandon's cheek was blanched, and he looked wretchedly haggard. He was a soldier, and a brave one, yet now death seemed to appal him; such a possibility as *this* had never been present to his thoughts; and the involuntary quiver of his lip told that he felt his position.

Horace was calm and stern; he had seen *her* exposed to blame...he had been insulted by the man before him; he had for him no mercy...for himself no fear; he had, as he thought, done his duty in all that had passed between him and his antagonist. There was more duty still for him to do.

So strangely do the traditions of men obscure religious principle, that standing there to murder or be murdered he thought was but—*a duty*.

Quietly and calmly, to all appearance, they stood opposite one another, waiting for the signal. They fired. Both fell !

Major Brandon was raised up, and a ghastly smile told them he was at least alive ; the ball had slightly wounded him ; but he was able to be driven from the ground by his friend, and even to pursue, after due medical advice, his way to Town.

But Horace Leigh did not move ; he did not speak ; but to the unspeakable terror of Stephen Forrester, poor Horace lay still, and pale, and pulseless on the ground.

CHAPTER X.

HORACE passed his own cottage on his way to the ground, and stopping at the door he had entered his room for a short time. He charged the faithful Mrs. Stock to sit up for him *alone*, and to let him in quietly *if he returned*.

Forrester, who was his second, drove him to the ground.

It was still so early that even the workmen had not left their cottages, when, at a

foot-pace, Horace Leigh's carriage returned home. His cottage was at some distance from the village ; no one saw him go—no one saw him return.

There was a slight knock at the door, which disturbed no one, for the whole household were buried in sleep ; old Mrs. Stock opened the door, and exclaimed...

" Good Heaven ! what can have happened !" as the young surgeon and Stephen lifted from the phaeton the bleeding and lifeless form of her young master.

" Hush !" said Mr. Forrester..." do not disturb any one yet ; he must be put into bed ; he has met with an accident."

" Oh, sir," sobbed the faithful woman, " was it a duel ?" added she, seeing the case, which she knew contained his pistols.

" We hope that he may live," replied Stephen ; " but if you have guessed the truth you must keep it a secret ; to every one who asks, he has met with *an accident*."

And with noiseless steps they carried him

up ; and as they removed his dress the blood flowed freshly and freely from the wound in his side.

“ Now,” said Mr. Forrester, “ *now* call the groom ; say that his master has been hurt ; and send this note immediately to Mr. Burdhurst ;” and he hastily wrote a few lines to an eminent surgeon, explaining the circumstance, and entreating him to lose no time. The younger surgeon doing what was necessary till the more experienced practitioner arrived.

With a face of intense anxiety did Stephen watch for his verdict.

“ He is very severely wounded ; I must let Mr. Leigh know his brother is so ill.”

“ For God’s sake,” said Stephen, “ do not let *him* know it was a duel...tell him anything but that.”

“ Was...*he* concerned in it ?” enquired Mr. Burdhurst, who was an old family friend ; the reports he had heard so lately of Mrs. Leigh’s flirtation flashing on his mind.

"No," stammered Forrester, who found he had betrayed what he most wished to hide..."Mr. Leigh had nothing to do with it."

"I understand you," said Mr. Burdhurst, with an expression of deep pain upon his fine features..."you may trust me...I understand you; his antagonist was Brandon."

"It was; but the insult was to Horace Leigh himself; he overheard things, which he took up, said of *himself*. You know what I would say."

"Yes," said Mr. Burdhurst—"I see. Every precaution has been taken to ensure secrecy; and I sincerely hope rumour will not be busy here."

At this moment poor Horace turned wearily round; and even Forrester saw in an instant that he was worse.

Mr. Burdhurst's first words were...

"Send for his brother; and, Mr. Forrester, do *you* explain—let no one attend him but yourself, and his old servant; fever is

coming on ; he will be delirious very soon. I cannot tell where this will end."

Mrs. Luke Leigh was sleeping ; the sounds of the music were still in her ears, the voice and the words of Major Brandon continued in her dreams, when she awoke with a start. Her maid was at her bedside, with a message from her husband.

" My master begs, ma'am, that you will go to breakfast without him, for he has been sent for to Mr. Horace."

" Horace ! what is the matter with him ?" said she, starting up with a full recollection of his lowering brow, and the quiet but stern efforts he had made to detach her from Major Brandon rushing full on her mind.

" He has met with an accident, and is not expected to live," said the maid-servant, exaggerating, as people of her class often do, what she had really heard.

" What accident ? what can you mean ?" said her mistress.

" I don't know the rights of it, ma'am,

but he was going somewhere after the ball, and was upset I believe, ma'am."

For a moment a suspicion of the truth flashed upon her mind, and rousing herself instantly from the heavy second sleep into which she had fallen, Emily prepared to go and hear how Horace really was.

Hastily swallowing her breakfast, she started for the village, which was very near, by cutting across the park ; but before she got there, the passing idea that her imprudence might have been the cause of a quarrel, passed entirely from the surface of her volatile mind ; it could never retain a serious impression for more than one moment ; though it was a shock even to her to hear that Horace, kind, good Horace Leigh, was ill, in danger, when she had seen him well and *angry with her* (there was the sting of the thought) so short a time before.

She was shown into the sick room, in which there was a deep silence. Mr. Burdurst stood feeling the pulse of his patient ; the affectionate Mrs. Stock was there, with

the tears running down her cheeks ; Luke Leigh was standing with his eyes fixed on his brother ; whilst Horace himself was lying with his lips parched, and his eyes bright and wild with the fever that was devouring him ;...this was the sight that met the gaze of his gay and giddy sister-in-law.

This was the consequence of flirtation !

“ Take...take away all those people ; why do they look in at the windows ? ”

“ There is no one,” said his brother.

“ They are gone now,” said Horace ; and all was silence for a short time, except the subdued sounds of grief.

Luke Leigh had no suspicion of the truth ; for as yet he had had no time to enquire more, or to hear more, than that going to Wensley with Mr. Forrester, Horace had met with an accident---This Mrs. Stock had told him.---Mr. Burdhurst could not leave his patient to explain ; but both he and Stephen Forrester felt they might be called on...and indeed they must be be prepared to explain...what both dreaded to tell.

This painful task was spared them ; for the delirium of the patient became more and more overpowering, and he raved only of what had occurred.

“ Emily, Emily,” said he, in the most touching tone of agonised entreaty, “ come to me, people are talking---*won't you come?*”

Luke Leigh drew himself sternly up ; but his wife crouched on her chair with terror and distress.

“ Do not attend to him, he raves,” said Mr. Burdhurst, feeling acutely for all those concerned in this disastrous business. “ You had better go. Mrs. Leigh, pray return home ---I will remain.”

“ I cannot leave him while there is danger,” said his brother.

“ Nor I,” sobbed his now conscience-stricken wife.

But there was more to come.

“ Emily, dear Emily ! for my sake do not ---I shall quarrel with that man---” then in a lower, most strange tone he continued :

"There are the pistols---now---now---is it time?---One of us must die---poor Emily! she will be sorry he is dead so soon!"

"This is most terrible," said Luke Leigh, "what *can* this mean?"

"*Delirium*," said Mr. Burdhurst, who dreaded Luke should think *he* knew the truth.

"And...and..." gasped Luke Leigh, "this was *no accident*?"

"Do not attend to the meaningless ravings of fever," said the surgeon, vaguely.

"Who—who came home with him?" demanded Luke, in an imperious voice.

"It was Mr. Forrester," replied the surgeon.

"Ah!" raved poor Horace, tossing wildly on his couch of anguish, "Brandon dead? no it is *I*! oh, Emily, dear Emily, you made me quarrel with that man; but hush, hush!" he whispered in a tone which thrilled the hearts of all his listeners, "it is a *secret*; she must not know it!--No!--no one shall know it but me---Forrester, hush---it is a

secret !---She is not to blame, dear Emily, it is not her fault---why did he say all that when I was near---I heard him---Let me go," he said, in a voice of thunder, and with a sudden change of idea, " Let me go, he is waiting for me---Where is Stephen ?---I shall be disgraced if I am late---I must, must *kill him*---" and he grew fainter and fainter till he sank back on his pillow.

" Exhaustion---he must be kept quite quiet," said Mr. Burdhurst, placing his finger on his lips.

Then I shall go---I shall soon be back," said Mr. Leigh, as with a look of stern determination---alarming in him---with cheeks and lips as ghastly as his brother's, he went at a full gallop to enquire of Stephen Forrester, who had returned home: " What the accident had been." More than half did he suspect the truth, but he would do nothing till he was certain.

He was received by Stephen who, with an agitation as great as his own, expressed his willingness to listen to what he had to say,

great were the struggles in his mind. How should he keep Horace Leigh's secret? not to do so might involve the most terrible consequences; to keep it could only be done by falsehood or by silence; there was nothing left for him, but to endeavour to sustain the latter part.

"What was this dreadful accident? you were with him, Forrester, will you tell me what has happened?"

Stephen had been greatly agitated by the events of the last four and twenty hours; his presence of mind forsook him now, when face to face with Luke; dreading the violence of his nature...feeling to the uttermost, the responsibility of anything he might say; knowing only too well, all that an imprudence on his part might lead to; yet, bound to truth...disastrous as the truth had been...disastrous as *it might become*; the travelled and accomplished man of the world was totally at a loss—he had been schooling himself for hours to meet the nearly inevitable trial, and yet he stood there before

Luke as totally unprepared with an answer as if he had not given the painful task a thought.

"*What* has occurred?" said Luke impatiently...gazing with his pale but excited face and kindling eyes upon his hesitating companion.

Stephen Forrester spoke at last. "Horace has met with an accident, under circumstances he is most anxious to conceal, for his own sake—I have promised to keep his secret, do not ask me to—break my word."

This was to Luke a confirmation of all he feared, and he looked up at Stephen's face; he saw there less of pain than he expected, so he determined to try if his own thoughts had led him wrong.

"The ravings of the poor sufferer have betrayed that secret," said the husband of the giddy Emily, with a forced calm, "I know that he has fought with Brandon."

Forrester's start brought full conviction to his mind and he turned a more ghastly white as he continued,

“ I fear—I know—the cause !”

“ No, no ;” *upon my honour, No,*” said Stephen thrown off his guard, yet with the unmistakeable earnestness of truth ; “ Horace heard Brandon speaking of *himself*, the insult was *to him*---he told me so himself ; the insult, I repeat it, was to Horace ; he had been lashed to anger, Brandon was furious ; words that could not be forgiven had passed between them before any one could interfere, and as Brandon and his friend were obliged to return immediately, as both were determined on an immediate meeting ; they met at daybreak ; and *this* is the result. Everything was done to soothe and calm them, but in vain,” and the tears stood in his eyes.

“ And---Brandon ?” gasped the husband.

“ Was driven from the ground apparently unhurt, though I remember that he fell, but *I*---thought only of Horace ; and now ?”

“ He is worse,” said Luke.

“ Worse ?” answered Stephen in a tone of the deepest grief.

“ You are not deceiving me---this is the

whole truth?" asked Luke Leigh who, throughout the whole scene, had acted with a strange and unnatural calmness, greater far than that of Stephen Forrester.

"The whole," replied the latter.

Luke Leigh said not a word, he grasped the hand of Mr. Forrester, and he returned, galloping in the same wild way upon his favorite horse, to the sick chamber of his brother.

What Mrs. Leigh's feelings were as *she sat there*, and heard the confirmation given to her worst fears, by her brother-in-law's delirious ravings, the truth of which she could not doubt, can scarcely be described; the tone of earnest, affectionate entreaty, the eager assertions, that "she was not to blame," touched the inmost recesses of that vain, light, heart:---the exclamation, "that one must die, that Major Brandon was dead," whilst he himself lay to all appearance dying; shook her very heart with horror and contrition for the childish playing with a danger, which had now taken this most terrible of

shapes; her gay and thoughtless spirit was bowed within her at that moment, never to rise again as it had been. She who had never thought before, sat there overwhelmed, borne away by agonies of thought. She listened in stony silence to those dreadful ravings, she saw nothing, knew nothing but that Death was on those two; death *brought by her*. She heard nothing now, but a fancied repetition of those words, which sunk into her heart burning their meaning there indelibly. She flung herself on her knees regardless of the presence of Mrs. Stock, whose deep attachment to the sufferer was so well-known to her: she took the parched and struggling hand of Horace in her own, she wept upon it, she shook body and mind in that great agony of grief, and of contrition.

The detention of his hand gave a new turn to his delirium, or perhaps he knew her and saw her anguish, as he raved on in a new vein.

“Oh,” shouted he; “let me go! I will—I must...save her, I will...for Luke will

kill her...for he knows all, there has been death enough, I will save *her*," murmured poor Horace, in a dreadful tone; "but I *must* save her." there was a pause.

"Luke, Luke!" said the sufferer's voice, in the most heartrending accents; "you shall not...for my sake, do not hurt her...I must, will save her...let me go..." and he struggled hard to raise himself, and could not!

It was a terrible thing to see the expressions of mortal fear, terror, and agony, that passed, like cloud, upon the young and lovely face of Emily; she watched, she listened to those dreadful words, which even in delirium, showed his love for her... that affection to which she had lately been so indifferent, because he stood in her way.

She listened to them, with her head raised, her eyes wide open, almost as wildly as his own; she grasped the curtains with a convulsive hold; then starting at a slight sound, and turning round, she caught the

stern eyes of her husband fixed upon her, with such a look, as she dared not meet again ; she who had dared his anger...defied his authority for years, quailed beneath that glance, and sinking on the ground, she crouched, with her hands covering her face ; it was an attitude of abject terror.

Could that be the gay and happy Mrs. Leigh, of the few short hours before ?

This was *flirtation* !

Luke Leigh said not a word to her ; he seemed satisfied with knowing the duel had not been about her, for he believed that Stephen Forrester was truth itself ; be that as it may, that one stern look, was the only proof he gave, of feeling on that subject ; his eyes never met his wife's again, though she sought his...for she longed for, although she feared an explanation...she sought, but it was in vain.

She dared not speak, awakened for the first time, and in such a way, to the consequences of her childish flirtation ; it came

upon her now with all the force, not merely of a folly, but of a crime.

Her mere amusement...had brought death.

All that day, she watched by the sick bed of Horace—they dared not admit a servant, or a nurse !

Mr. Burdhurst, who had been visiting some other patients, returned ; and for many hours, never left the sufferer ; they sat in that room, silent and still ; and heavy were the hours, as they passed in that slow terrible silence, broken only by the delirious ravings of Horace Leigh.

When night came on, Luke commanded his wife, in a tone, she dared not resist, to return home ; he sat up with his brother ; on her return, he retired to rest. For three days, this was the unvarying routine...the husband and wife never exchanged a word.

On the fourth day, Mr. Burdhurst was much engaged, and Luke and Emily were alone and silent in the room.

An exhaustion which was very alarming, had succeeded to the fever ; and as they watched him, he suddenly opened his languid eyes, with a look of pain and terror, made a faint struggle, as if for breath ...and then sank back, on his pillows---lifeless.

With a wild cry of terror, Mrs. Leigh, rushed towards him, but her husband pushed her fiercely away ; and all his pent up violence struggling for utterance he exclaimed in a tone, which curdled her blood :

“ Back ! back, I say---you shall not touch him---this is your doing.” Then calling for assistance, he exclaimed. “ Here ! send for Mr. Burdhurst---bring restoratives !” his orders were promptly and instantly obeyed by Mrs. Stock and the servants, but nothing that they could do---had power to restore him.

The room was cleared ; and the brother and his wife were left to their sorrow for the dead.

Luke Leigh did not know till that hour

how much he loved his brother : Horace had never thwarted him—had never interfered with him...had been more to him than he ever knew till then. Luke Leigh, the cold, the rough, the pre-eminently selfish man felt *his own loss* in Horace ! and he stooped down, and kissed the pale, cold forehead of his lost brother.

Grief had on him a characteristic effect ; it made him furious ; for suddenly springing up with an energy his own weakness would not have allowed at any other time, he strode up to his wife, and with a deeply contracted brow covering and darkening his angry eyes, with teeth clenched in rage, and a deep, low, but distinct, voice he said...

“ Go home....You shall not stay here, with this...your doing.—You know it...you have killed my brother—good, noble, generous Horace ! dare not to speak, for I know all ; your vanity, your childish folly has done this. Mark me, from this hour we part. Go...back to the home that shall be yours

only till all is over....I return to my home no more till you have left it."

"Oh, Luke," sobbed Emily, "I have not deserved this; I know my vanity has killed him; but I would rather have died myself...God knows I would!" her burst of tears choked farther utterance.

"I cannot meet you; you have caused *his* death; I could not bear to see you," said Luke Leigh, in a tone of frenzy...."Go...I command you ...leave me with my dead brother."

The family failing of the Leighs had brought them now to *this*.

CHAPTER XI.

MRS. LUKE LEIGH, the gay, the giddy, the flirt, sat with her thoughts urging her, almost to desperation, in the house of which she was now scarcely the mistress. So great, so terrible was the change that had come upon her in the last few days, that often as she sat there, holding her throbbing temples with her trembling hands, she thought, she almost hoped, all this must be delusion, and that she was mad!

Horace, the kind, good Horace! who had

been more than a brother to her; she had destroyed him; for well, only too well did she remember the looks that he had given to Major Brandon; whatever might have been the immediate cause of the quarrel, she knew it never could have taken place but for her.

Then Major Brandon! she had not dared to ask *of him*...it was profanation even to think of him...and yet...was he too...dead? it was a thought she dared not, could not, meet.

And then her husband? what a wife she had been to him! not even his harshness could excuse her; her vain amusement had cost his brother's life. And then those furious words of Luke's came back upon her memory ...and they were terrible indeed.

She was to leave him...her home...her children!

The last separation was the worst: she had been gay, foolishly giddy; but she had not deserved *that*; no one but Luke with

his coarse violence could have so visited her faults upon her.

Her children! when she returned home, the children came as usual...they *would* go to her; and when they saw she was in tears they hung about her crying too; they knew not how much cause they would soon have for tears! When grief exhausted hers, their summer tears were soon dried up, and they were prattling with their merry little voices just as usual: Emily could bear anything but that, knowing that she must leave them! She sent them back to their own room; she could not bear their presence. But little Mary struggled hard to "stay and comfort poor mama."

And they were gone! and she too must soon go...she knew not where; and how would the world be busy with the duel and her name!

And other thoughts were torturing her; the hours she had past by that bed of sickness had been longer than her whole life to her; they had done the work of years. The

sorrowful silence, the agonised watching, the fearful consequences of her thoughtlessness had worked their way into her heart ; and that pale, trembling, agonised face was not more changed, than was the gay and giddy mind.—She was altogether changed, chastened, subdued...she saw at last that she had bartered peace and duty for amusement, and for flirtation ; and humbled by a deep sense of the vanity of her whole life, she wept in bitter and sincere repentance.

A slight knock at the door made her start to her feet, she thought it might be Luke ; but her astonishment could scarcely have been greater then than now, for the intruder was Mrs. Stock.

“ I am come, ma’am, sent by Mr. Burd-hurst to tell you all is *not* over yet.”

Mrs. Leigh clasped her hands in ecstasy.

“ He was only in a bad faint, ma’am, and is now quite sensible—I am come for you ; but, ma’am,” and the faithful creature burst into tears, “ it is only the

lightening before death...You must come quickly !”

Emily looked up in utter anguish, and said in a low voice :

“ I cannot come.”

She dared not go !

“ *Mr. Leigh* sent for you,” replied the servant—she understood her well.

Once more did Emily enter that sad room ; once more did she stand in the presence of her husband.

There was a striking change in Horace Leigh ; he was propped up by pillows, and seemed weak almost to death ; but there was now sense in those large, dark eyes ; and mind had now conquered delirium.

In silence Mr. Burdhurst resigned his place to the trembling Emily, and left the room, but not the house.

Horace feebly moved his hand towards her, and she took it in her own. Luke held his brother's other hand.

Horace seemed to be husbanding his

ebbing strength; he made a painful effort, and whispered in a low but perfectly audible tone :

“ Listen to me—both of you...will you ...fulfil the wishes...of a...dying man ?”

“ Yes ! I promise,” said his trembling sister-in-law.

“ Promise me, Luke,” said the changed voice with another strong effort for utterance, “ or I shall not die in peace.”

“ I promise,” gasped Luke Leigh, even his selfish nature softened now.

“ Now listen—the words of the dying, Luke, are *truth*—it was not for her...I met ...that man...he...insulted *me*—she has been foolish...vain...but he said nothing about *her*---She will be warned by this---I was goaded to madness...Luke—my brother—when you thought I was dead—I heard your words—every word—I call upon you—to *retract them*—what will become of her if you reject her—for *this* you must not do it—you have no other cause—Love her and shield her—she will be giddy—and

vain no more.---You have promised me this already---for it is *this I ask.*"

"I will—I promise," said Luke Leigh, completely overcome.

"And you, Emily, love him—and—forget *how I died*...be—be---" and he gasped for breath; every word had been brought out with intervals becoming longer---intervals for rest---he was evidently passing away; but suddenly rallying, he said, with earnest, eager looks at Luke:

"Promise!"

"I do---solemnly promise," said one, and then the other voice choked with emotion.

"Thank God," said the sufferer, raising his eyes to heaven, with an expression of happiness; "thank God!...now I will sleep..."

Again he made a last and violent effort, he put the hands he held, together, and murmuring, "God bless you, if I never wake again," he closed his wearied eyes, and soon sank into a heavy sleep.

Mr. Burdhurst entered softly; the hus-

band and wife did not move, till Mr. Burd-hurse whispered to them :

“Come away, let there be no movement in the house, this is the crisis, he will either wake no more, or wake *to live*.”

They watched—listening, lest every breath should be the last ;...through that remaining day they listened!

Sometimes there would be a pause, and they thought all was over, then the breathing would become strong and regular again ...then he would move and they were terrified, Luke and his miserable wife. Then he would be quite still, and they were terrified at that.

The day wore on and evening was come at last ! the setting sun was streaming in at the window, shut out by the heavy curtains. Horace Leigh moved.

In a moment, Mr. Burdhurst was at his side, his hand upon his wrist...there was a pause. The blood in Emily's veins ran cold, and Luke's sullen face was livid.

The pause was terrible.

The hand of the experienced surgeon was still upon the sufferer's wrist.

And the two watchers dared not look up in his face, lest they should see the worst, written there...At last:

"Be thankful," Mr. Burdhurst said, in a voice of heartfelt gratitude; "*for he is saved.*"

Mrs. Leigh for a moment clasped her hands over her eyes...then rising with tottering steps flung herself into her husband's arms.

Horace was young and strong; the wound was not in itself, a very dangerous one, and the fever which followed it, was owing almost as much to the violent agitation of mind, in which he had spent the four and twenty hours which preceded its infliction, as to the injury itself, and he recovered with considerable rapidity from its effects.

The day when he first sat up in an arm chair by the open window, with Luke on one side of him and Emily close to him, hold-

ing his hand in both of hers, was one of the very happiest of her life.

The secret had been well kept...the altercation which led to such fearful results, had taken place, in a low tone, and out of hearing of the servants ; the time of meeting had been so early, that not even the labouring men were astir ; no one had seen them go—no one had seen them return.

Major Brandon had communicated to no one but Emily, his half formed determination, to remain a short time longer, than he had intended, in her neighbourhood ; his absence after the ball, created no surprise.

The “accident,” to Horace, who was much liked, would have created more sensation than it did, but for the sudden death of one of the members for the county,...a storm of politics was raging at the moment, and in the interest excited by the occurrence of such an event, at a crisis of which doubled its importance, the whole attention of the neighbourhood was engrossed, and the curiosity of the many enquiring friends, was

more easily satisfied, than it would otherwise have been.

The expression, "accidentally hurt," could be made use of even *by his second*.

If a suspicion arose of the real cause of it, amongst those who had been present at the ball, the extreme assiduity of the joint attendance of Luke and his wife, at the sufferer's pillow...and the very visible increase of affection between them, in consequence of it, blinded their eyes.

The truth was never known, save to the few immediately concerned in the brief, but important events, connected with the duel.

Even Major Brandon felt he had done mischief enough.

The dangerous illness of Horace, showed Luke and made him feel, what it would be really to lose his brother ; and the scenes of that darkened room had their full influence on the harsh and rude feelings of the selfish master of High Elms...he had been touched and softened when Horace placed Emily's hand in his—it was a second, and more

solemn union, than the first, with its gay hopes and thoughts...he felt in some degree, that he had not been what he might, to his fair young wife ; he had not loved and cherished her ; and that impressive and heart-stirring committal of her, once again to his care, by one whom they supposed to be on the very brink of the grave, had worked a full and permanent effect.

Horace stayed long enough with them to see his anxious prayer and hope was being fast granted to him ; but as soon as he was equal to the exertion he returned to town ; making an excuse not to see Grace again, he took leave of the Leighs and Stephen.

The suits of Sir Josiah Walgrave and Mr. Simmons wanted his utmost care, for he was the junior counsel in both, and they were coming on at last.

Mr. Toulmin had already placed the facts and papers in his hands, and he had arranged them with all that lucidity of mind for which he was even now remarkable, and with much eager and anxious attention. In these two

cases involving the interests of Isabelle's father, Horace would have given the world to lead; he felt no one could enter into them as *he* would; but he knew well that the only consequence of all his toil and trouble would be to invest Mr. Feegrasp his leader, with all the credit that should have been his. Nevertheless the morning when, by chance, both the suits were to come on, Horace had fully prepared himself, as an exercise to his own mind, with everything that could be said in favour of both Sir Josiah and the unfortunate Mr. Simmons.

For some minutes before the first of the two causes were called on, Mr. Toulmin might have been observed rushing about the purlieus of the court in a state of considerable excitement, evidently searching for some personage who was not forthcoming; and accordingly, when the critical moment arrived, Horace was obliged to intimate to the Judge that his senior was absent.

The latter was soon after discovered, not far off indeed, but quietly occupied in

another cause in an adjoining court, and the Judge having expressed his surprise, "that so able an advocate of the principles which guided the decrees of the court in which he sat—those of equity and good faith...should exhibit such a total disregard of them in practice," continued addressing Horace,

"You must be your own leader, Mr. Leigh, as it will be unfair to the other side to postpone the case; and the time of the court is too valuable to be wasted by waiting for your senior."

"And Usher," continued the learned Judge somewhat petulantly, and levelling at the unlucky official, like an instrument of torture (as indeed many a young Barrister had found it), a grim looking, double eye-glass framed in tortoise-shell.

"If you cannot contrive to preserve silence in the Court I shall be compelled to have some conversation with your successor upon the subject!"

Thus admonished, the Usher redoubled that peculiar official sibillation which none

but the Usher of a Court can produce ; and having succeeded in drowning all other sounds, Horace, with a beating heart and a flushed cheek, rose ; he was indeed and after all, *to lead!*

Thanks to his own hard work and intimacy with Mr. Toulmin, the solicitor for both his clients, Horace was completely master of his subject.

With the same clear-headed terseness of speech which had already won him a favorable decision from a Judge prejudiced against him, Horace Leigh proved the base swindling which had so deeply involved the unsuspecting Mr. Simmons in the toils of Robbs and Co., clearing him by that means from the most crushing of his liabilities. It was no easy task, but conducted with a consummate skill worthy of an older man ; the better cause of the unhappy enthusiast prevailed.

It was a far easier matter, by means of the papers Fred had lost, the very papers found by Tom, to prove that no real partnership existed between Mr. Simmons and Sir Josiah

Walgrave, and making the most of his just causes by calm and eloquent words, Horace had the deep satisfaction of hearing both decrees given in his favour.

What it was to him, to know that by his own unassisted exertions he had brought comfort and peace into the future days of "Isabelle's father," can scarcely be imagined; it was a triumph in which there was no sin.

Fred came to Horace, grasped his hand, and in his usual forcible and appropriate phraseology declared,

"It was splendidly jolly!"

By main force Fred obliged his friend to come to Isabelle, he asserted:

"She would most certainly go mad if he didn't go."

And Horace went, was forcibly dragged off, too happy to offer any great resistance, ...to be thanked.

And Isabelle with those beautiful, soft, pleading brown eyes of hers, filled with

tears of joy, fixed them upon Horace, and said :

“ I thank you, Mr. Leigh, for having saved my parents from a life abroad...they will owe all their happiness, when they come back to the old house, *to you*...and, Mr. Leigh, this is much, very much...also *to us*.”

It was indeed; for Sir Josiah had promised that he would, if once relieved from all this pressure, place the young Keanes above all common anxieties and cares about their money matters.

And Fred was like a child, for Horace dined with them...*with Fred and Isabelle* upon that happy day...and he drank “ Horatio’s ” health, and the “ old gentleman”, by whom he meant the judge, and said :

“ Shouldn’t I like to be you, Horace, that’s all.”

And *he* remembered there was a time when he had envied Fred ; but he answered quietly, though with a sly and quiet smile :

“ You should have worked as I did.”

“ Horace !” said Fred reproachfully.
“ How could I ?”

The house in Cavendish Square is filled again with Walgraves. Sir Josiah sits in his study much less than he did, he is slightly disgusted with machinery and projects ; it is exceedingly doubtful whether he will ever enter upon any speculations again ; and as to the study itself, there is not one invention to be seen, not one wonderful and incomprehensible machine.

Lady Walgrave is only too happy, and too thankful to find herself in her own home again after so long an absence. She has a few, indeed a great many twinges of conscience when she thinks that, in a great degree, she owes her present happiness to the very person of whom she had spoken so slightly and angrily to Isabelle, her only comfort, now that he is rising so fast in his profession, is that she has another daughter !

And in ordering the dress from Paris, which was to adorn the still pretty and still

unmarried Louisa, she had thought of Horace.

There was on this particular day a dinner-party given after Lady Walgrave's old formula of :

"Sir Josiah, I wish to ask Mr. Leigh to dinner, he has been very attentive to——"

"Our *Interests*, my dear, not to our daughter," was the good but superficial Sir Josiah's answer.

"Attentive to...never mind what," said Lady Walgrave, pettishly. "May I have a dinner-party?"

"My dear love," said Sir Josiah, as usual, when he meant to be cutting and annoying to his wife, "you have so completely your own way that I suppose I ought to be obliged to you for going through the forms of asking me my leave..." here his good-nature quite prevailed. "And so Lady Walgrave as you bore the troubles *I* brought upon you so kindly, and so well...you shall enjoy our renewed prosperity as you like... we will enjoy it together."

"Thank you, my dear," said his well-pleased wife, she knew she had behaved well, and she liked to be told of it.

And so, there was a dinner-party : the Walgraves had but lately returned, they had scarcely had time to renew their acquaintance with any but intimates, and consequently the party consisted of old faces and old friends.

"How very delightful," said Horace Leigh to Louisa, "to see an old face again."

"I'm sorry you think mine so old!" answered Louisa laughing.

"Forrester does not appear to think so," said Horace, very pointedly.

"Very agreeable person Mr. Forrester," said Louisa.

"I am glad you think so, for his sake," answered Horace.

At that moment dinner was announced, and certainly Horace Leigh was very rude—instead of offering his arm to Louisa, by whom he had been sitting, he deliberately crossed the room and offered his to Mrs.

Willoughby Green...it was anything but polite.

The moment he had left her side, however, his place was eagerly filled by Stephen Forrester, he wanted a nice, quiet wife, who would not be too much for him, and possibly he might find one in good time.

It was all a very curious and yet all a very common, and every-day kind of thing that meeting at the dinner-party...they had all forgotten the old days in a sufficient degree...Blanche had her husband, Isabelle had Fred, and Horace loved Grace.

So they were all happy and merry; he felt that his exertions had caused much peace and happiness to *Isabelle's* parents, and he was content.

Two of the party were, however, more than content; and if Lady Walgrave could have seen all that was going on in the heart of Stephen Forrester, *who had a fine estate*, she would have been also more than content.

In point of fact he was only waiting till

Horace should have proposed for Grace... which he felt positively certain would soon be announced to him...before he proposed for Louisa Walgrave.

It had been a case of love at first sight; they had not often met; but English beauty, which she possessed in no common degree, added to an elegance of manner and appearance, acquired in Paris, had made a victim of him on the spot. He had, of course, seen many equally pretty creatures, but though he had admired them, he was not then looking out for a wife as he was now.

Mr. Simmons knew, from his lawyer, that at last the causes were coming on, and it would now be decided whether he was an irrecoverably ruined man, and whether he had involved his unsuspecting friend. That fact weighed heavily on the naturally upright mind of the inventor...it lay heavy on his soul...the ruin of his friend.

“For myself, Kate...ourselves...I have but little hope; fate is too much against

us ; we are doomed ; but for that good, confiding man...I wish he may be spared...I wish I may be cleared in his eyes ; I fear he thinks I knew where I was leading him ; but it was *not* so...Kate, you know that it was *NOT* so. Robbs, with his plausible words persuading me to sign...I knew not what.—Oh, Kate, Kate, there is nothing to be trusted in this world...except a woman's heart!"

Such a look of deep and devoted love passed from those wild and mournful haggard eyes to hers, as more than repaid her all she had done and suffered and felt for him, and that was...much.

It was a beautiful, a holy, and a touching thing, to see their love for one another.

There was a silence then, of words, but not of looks, as they sat there gazing at one another.

"Our resources...are almost...at the last," said Mr. Simmons, in a hollow voice.

"Surely, employment might be found,"

hazarded the wife, putting into her looks, by force, a hope she did not feel.

“ True, but I cannot work,” said Mr. Simmons, passionately...“ I am come to that; the fever that has been so long slowly making its way,” and he wrung his poor, burning hands one in the other---“ Kate, it has reached my brain.”

And she sat there quite still ; no change came over her face, but the words struck at her heart---she knew how true they were.

“ Poor Kate,” ejaculated the enthusiast---and she shivered from head to foot. And he the while felt more for her than for himself---“ *my Kate !*”

And these last sounds seemed to loosen the tightness round her heart, and she wept.

She scarcely had a right to be unhappy whilst she was so beloved.

“ What will become of you ?” continued the unfortunate man of genius, “ when I am gone.”

She would not, dared not, understand him.

"Gone---where?" asked the wife.

"Hence, to be no more seen---gone, Kate ---for ever," replied the enthusiast; "I feel I am a dying man."

"Hush---do not say that to *me*," said Kate; "when good news comes, you will be better."

"Will it ever come?" answered he, in a tone of bitterness unusual to him. "Position, honour, the very means of bare existence, Kate, are gone."

"Oh, but---there is hope---indeed, indeed, there is," replied his wife; "Mr. Toulmin declares he has a clue; there was some villainy in the business---it may be found out."

"But not in time for me," said the enthusiast, with his eyes fixed upon vacancy.

"What do you mean?" asked she, struck by the strangeness of his manner.

"I feel---it may---but not in time for me," repeated the inventor; "I feel quite sure

of that, but cannot tell you---how the knowledge came."

There was something about him, as he said all this, which gave her a vague fear.

"I frighten you!" said he, reading, with his quick eyes, her very thoughts. "After all our long years have I lived, Kate, to frighten you!" and he gave such a melancholy, but still fascinating smile, and drew his chair closer to her. "*my love*; it is no meaningless word from me to you; I have long read your thoughts; you feared mine were too wild---growing too strange and wild for a sound mind."

She started violently, and the colour rushed all over her once fair face.

"Such were your fears---and not wholly without a cause---my thoughts were wicked, murmuring, tending to death before my appointed time. But fear not, Kate, the hour of that temptation is gone by; *I will not leave you, till I must.*"

She flung her arms round his neck and sobbed aloud. That he had discovered her

terrors was a great shock—that he would not renew them, was a mercy...to be received with tears of joy.

“I have been more calm of late?” asked the broken hearted man.

She bowed her head in assent, she really could not utter a word.

“I have seen the hand of God...I am resigned,” replied the enthusiast, lifting those large, sad eyes of his, towards Heaven. “Had we been prosperous, Kate, I should have loved too much...the world would have been too dear to me---and I must die, the fever creeps along---slow poison, Kate, but sure.”

She answered not a word---but her heart was beating fast and violently.

“Think how happy we might have been,” said he, “with my ambition gratified---my keen appreciation of the fair things of life ---oh Kate, we should have been too happy ---and happiness is not for this world---and lately, Kate, in my solitary musings, not lonely...not alone...for I had *this*,” and he

took out a small old Bible she had given him years ago---before they married, her first gift to him.

“ And, I have learnt, Kate, to look and seek for the happiness which has eluded my eager grasp here...I have been searching for treasure *there*.”

And again he gave a look with those saddened, but now hopeful, eyes at the Heaven above.

“ There is but one cure for sin and sorrow, Kate. I am resigned...I have taken up my burden—Life is ebbing away, but I will hold fast by the Christian’s hope, by Him who lived, and died for us.”

The wife said not a word, but she buried her face in her hands, and prayed.

When she again raised her head the careworn look was gone, the joy, the surpassing ecstasy of having received such mercy--shone visibly upon her face...from every feature beamed the joy unspeakable of answered prayer.

And they sat there with such holy,

chastened, thankful looks, that no one who saw them at that moment could have thought they were the miserable, hopeless, dying creatures, that they were.

He said no more, he had opened his heart to comfort her as he knew it would, and he rose and kissing her forehead tenderly, he left the room.

Never was there more thankfulness in any human heart than in that of the much enduring wife, who flung herself on her knees when he had left her. It was long before she rose. They were to be envied that pair, envied by the prosperous and the happy of the world ; for their griefs had been blessed to them.

The enthusiast went for letters ; but there were none, the next day and the next, and the same answer still.

They were then at Rudesheim on the banks of the Rhine ;...and it had become a habit with Mr. Simmons now, to row about, or rather to sit back, in silence and thought, whilst he was rowed gently on the broad and

placid river...Sometimes he would desire the boatman to let the little skiff go as it would, upon the water, and the motion soothed his excited nerves, and the coolness was very delicious to his fevered frame.

His wife would sit on the banks and watch him, patiently awaiting his return, she always said she did not like a boat; but really...she thought it better for him, more full of calm enjoyment for him to be alone, than with her to think about—for the quiet and phlegmatic German sitting there rowing, was as little of an interruption to the enthusiast as his oars.

A few days after the conversation which has been recorded, Mr. Simmons stepped into the little skiff, and nodding affectionately at his patient wife, put out into the centre of the lovely Rhine. Near Rudesheim the river takes so sharp a turn, at so very acute an angle, that from the side of the town nothing at all of the next bend of the river can be seen, a wall of rocks seems to convert the stream into a lake, and round

the sharp corner the channel is very narrow ...almost cut in the rocks of the bed of the river.

The boat went idly on, and Mrs. Simmons watched it with even more interest than usual, she felt anxious about it, and smiled at her own nervousness about the quiet, smiling river, but, nevertheless, she walked quickly along the banks past Rudesheim towards the Mouse Tower, watching the boat.

Mr. Simmons leant back as the little nutshell of a skiff past on in its gentle, almost motionless course, his thoughts were holy ones, for his whole mind was changed.

Presently from Rudesheim another and much larger boat put out into the centre of the stream, and then the boatmen rested on their oars---apparently enjoying the excessive beauty of the scene, for the boat held only themselves---waiting for something.

“To the Mouse Tower,” said Mr. Simmons.

The phlegmatic German muttered some-

thing in a low tone, but he did not take his pipe from his mouth, and spoke so indistinctly that the enthusiast, who was wrapt in thought, did not attend to him---merely imperiously waving to him with his hand the way he wished to go.

They had been coasting close to the Rudesheim side, in the full sight of the anxious wife, when, as he was ordered, the man rowed energetically across the river towards the Tower.

So calm and still and beautiful the scene, it seemed as if nothing could disturb its surpassing loveliness.

But suddenly...swiftly, *with the stream* round the sharp corner of the bending Rhine unseen...unnoticed till then---swept a large steamer.

The little boat, rowed by one man, full in its path.

The boatman saw the imminent peril and rowed...madly straining every nerve.

The enthusiast steered with his best skill.

The captain of the steamer tried to change his course, but it was too late.

The little boat was still full in the steamer's path.

On came the large and powerful machinery—the boatman threw himself overboard on the farther side.

And the enthusiast was alone to meet the shock.

Swifter than words or even thought the little boat was crushed under water, and Mrs. Simmons saw her husband sink.

But the large boat, which had put off with men waiting for passengers, saw the inevitable danger of the little skiff, saw it with a grief scarcely inferior to hers, for as the old boatman flung himself into the water, the two who had sat so quietly there, till roused into extreme exertion, gave each a cry of grief, the old man was their father!...and they strained their hardy sinews to the uttermost to save him.

They had seen, over the rocks and vineyards, the train of smoke announcing the coming steamer which their father and the inventor had been too near to see...and they had

rowed on after the little boat in case of harm.

The old man swam just clear of the danger ...but was sinking fast when he felt friendly hands, saw well-known faces over him...he was saved by his sons.

“The stranger?” gasped the old man, who had learnt to love the good and gentle Englishman.

And they looked round.

The steamer had paused in its way.

No fragment of the skiff was visible but at a little distance something rose for a moment to the surface, and was going down like lead, when by a few vigorous strokes the boat was on the spot...and the body of the enthusiast was lifted with care into it...although they saw that he was dead.

The wife who from the bank close by had seen it all, had uttered no shriek, paralyzed—she had looked on her husband's death... but when she saw his rescue...not seeing what they who saved him saw, her hopes

rise high, and waving to them to return to the town...she ran wildly on.

They placed before her the corpse of her beloved, they carried it to their poor apartment; she would not believe that he was gone—and hours and hours, she spent in all the offices for restoring those that have been drowned. At last, *at last* with rapture she discovered that life seemed to return...her own had been a sad and weary life, but she would have lived it all again, in all its varied griefs, for that one moment's joy. But her happiness was, alas, of short duration; animation and consciousness returned, but not for long. The shock had been too great for an enfeebled frame, and the enthusiast was sinking fast.

During the attendance which had restored her husband, Mrs. Simmons more than once started from a sudden and violent pain in her heart, it often came of late, brought on by a life of nervous terror; but it was more severe than usual.

“ My love,” said Mr. Simmons, “ surely there must be letters now ; there has been some mistake, go yourself, dearest.”

He spoke in such a feeble, altered voice, that she could scarcely answer, and dared not contradict him.

She returned, and to his enquiring look, she answered :

“ There are none.”

A sigh of bitter disappointment reached her anxious ears.

“ You will have enough left to take you back to England, love...when I am...at rest,” murmured the dying man, “ if I could but know you would be above want!” and he turned himself painfully and wearily to the wall that she might not see his face.

Just then a person came to the door, and said :

“ Madame asked for letters, and there were none for her ; but here is a large packet for Monsieur.”

The wife sat, trembling violently, down by her husband’s couch, and he propped him-

self up to listen with his sunken eyes and altered face—hoping...*for her*.

And she read out the tidings :

“ Horace Leigh had gained both causes ; Sir Josiah was not involved as the inventor’s partner, and in the case of Robb’s swindling had been proved...” the tears of the unhappy woman fell so fast that she could not see to read...” but better days were come...they might be at ease, the lawyer congratulated his client, and forwarded him money.”

She showed the notes to him ; but Mr. Simmons said :

“ I shall not want it, love, I can die happy...I can leave you now.”

The sufferer asked to be propped up, quite upright, and looked fondly in his wife’s face ---then, as if unequal to its own support, his head sank heavily upon his pillows as she sat by him.

She thought he slept, and did not move

for a short time, then gently and cautiously she arranged the pillows under her husband's head---he slept, indeed, but it was the sleep of Death.

- Mrs. Simmons looked at him as if it were a dream---this terrible calamity that had befallen her---she looked on for awhile, and then summoned assistance though she knew it could be of no avail.

She went mechanically through all the necessary duties of such a fearful loss.

But when they came to place the unfortunate enthusiast in his last resting place, she gave a cry and sprang forward vehemently, sprang, and fell.

They raised her quickly, but the spirit had past away---the pain at her heart gave warning of the fatal complaint which had struck home---when he no longer needed her.

They were buried in one unnoticed grave. Not even Death could part them long.

CHAPTER XII.

FIVE years had past since Mrs. Vernon died ; when one day Mrs. Leigh had taken a drive as usual, and Luke, having an incipient twinge of the gout, had resigned himself to seeking amusement in the house ; he had no companion but little Mary, who had remained at home rather unwillingly, though very fond of her father. The only creature in the wide world who cared much for him was his child, and he knew it.

“ Do, dear papa, come and walk in the

gallery, and take me into that funny room where you and mama so seldom go ; there is a fire there to-day, papa, I saw Anne lighting it, so I peeped in, and I am sure there must be curious things in that old cabinet ; do show them to me, will you ? You have nothing else to do but play with me---you said so, didn't you just now ? do, dear papa !”

If any one else had asked Luke Leigh to go one way it would probably have ensured his going the other ; but the child had a strong hold on the only sensitive part of his nature and could turn him at her will ; so the father, with a due respect to his gouty limb, limped slowly through the gallery into the favourite sitting-room of old Mrs. Vernon.

The first feeling which crossed his amiable mind was, “ So this is mine in spite of her ;” and the smile he gave was worthy of the thought ; he had seldom been in that room since the time when they were searching for the will, and as he remembered that, he

again looked grimly pleased. Emily, occasionally, and but seldom, used the room, for it was situated on the bedroom-floor ; and unless any of the family were too ill to go down stairs it was never wanted ; Luke himself, when too much troubled with gout to descend to the lower regions, was much too cross to leave his dressing-room.

Little Mary, who had an amusingly quick eye for all domestic matters, was quite right : a fire was blazing away to air the room ; she pointed out to her father a famous chair ; it had been Mrs. Vernon's favorite seat ; she found him a footstool, and then jumping about him, and merrily clapping her hands she exclaimed...

“ My goodness ! dear papa, how comfortable you do look in this nice room ; I do like something strange...don't you ? ”

He did not answer her, for he was in a reverie ; so she danced off to amuse herself ; and presently he looked up and glanced his eyes carelessly round the room.

It had been fitted up, in Mr. Vernon's

time, expressly for his wife, and was a kind of lady's library, not a boudoir. Two windows on one side, and one large one on the other gave the advantage of sunshine and a variety of prospect ; between the two windows stood an old Indian cabinet, with its drawers still full, just as Mrs. Vernon had left them, Emily had such a regard for her memory that she could not touch or destroy her things. The other sides of the room were fitted up with book-cases and books ; neither husband or wife cared much for reading, so that except when Horace, had now and then, made a voyage of discovery amongst the old and excellent works they contained, nobody had touched them ; the rest of the house had been changed, past knowledge, by Luke, against the better taste and better feeling of his wife, and not always improved, but this room still spoke, in every part of it, of its former mistress. It was here she spent her mornings, indeed latterly the whole day ; here she regulated her numerous affairs, all of which, with the

independence and activity of her character, she overlooked herself ; here she arranged her numerous charities, and here she performed her earnest and sincere devotions ; close by Luke Leigh, within his reach, as it had always been within her own, still stood the large old bible, with its clear and magnificent print, which had been left her nearly half a century ago, by an old friend. On each side of the fire stood a comfortable arm-chair, and by the one now occupied by the new master of the house was placed an *escritoir*. None of the furniture of the room was very old, as its arrangement had been one of the last acts of Mr. Vernon's life ; but this *escritoir* was very handsome, and very modern, containing many new improvements ; the old lady had not long possessed it when she died ; there seemed quite a fatality about the furniture of that quiet room. The principal thing to be remarked... and it caught Luke's eye as he looked round — was the old Indian cabinet ; and remembering little Mary's wish to look into it, he

placed her on a chair, and began, to her infinite delight, to search in such of the drawers as were not locked, indeed in one of the open ones he found a key which opened the rest ; and as he discovered it he muttered...

“ Just like Emily’s confounded carelessness ...leaving everything open.”

And Emily deserved the reproach this time, for she would not lock up her drawers ...it worried her ; she would rather lose anything than lock it up, and some people share that weakness with her.

Well, Mr. Leigh turned out of this drawer and that, old, curious relics of the past, curious rather than valuable ; he had seen them without noticing them once ; and now they served as playthings for his child.

By chance, in putting back an old miniature with a heavy case, it struck the back of a drawer, and it sounded hollow. He had nothing on earth to do, so it struck him there might possibly be a secret drawer, and it would amuse him to seek for it.

He knocked...it certainly sounded hollow ; his curiosity was piqued ; he tried and tried again, till, aided by chance, a secret drawer flew open in his hand ; almost as much delighted as little Mary herself, he took it down to examine its contents, and found a sum of money in notes and gold.

“ Ha !” muttered he...“ this is the money the bailiff declared that he had paid, the receipt for which we saw, and of which we found no trace ; I remember thinking Miss White must know more about it than she ought ; ten, twenty, sixty, eighty... hum ; this is not all ; the sum, if I remember right, was a hundred and forty---yes, that was it ; perhaps I may find the rest ;” and he resumed his tappings.

“ Oh look again, papa, how nice ! real golden sovereigns, such pretty things---do find some more !” exclaimed little Mary, quite wild with the unexpected amusement.

“ *Such pretty things*” how many echo the feelings of the child, and how much we risk

at times "to find some more"! So Luke Leigh tapped and searched till his gouty limb became really painful, but in vain; he could not find the rest of the lost sum; so, more cross at not finding the whole than pleased at having found the half, the master of the house hobbled to the chair by the fire, and threw himself into it with a groan.

"Mary, dear, give me the footstool," said her father; and the child flew to his assistance. It was always a pretty sight to see her blue eyes and light curls dancing with delight as she proudly waited on her father. When she had arranged him to his satisfaction she stood with her little face deep in thought for a moment, and then said, abruptly...

"Papa, isn't this a kind of desk? and don't you put your money in your writing-desk? and wouldn't you, perhaps, find some more pretty sovereigns in here?" and she touched the escrutoire with her little hand. "Do try now, papa...*do*...just see if I am right; I shouldn't wonder a bit."

"Oh nonsense, go and play," groaned Luke, savage even to her for once, and the disappointed child obeyed, and busily engaged with some of the contents of the cabinet, she troubled him no more.

After a time, and with a little rest, the pain went off and Luke, glancing at the gold before him, remembered what the child had said; a mania for discovering secret drawers, had seized him, and he determined to try his ingenuity again. Sixty pounds more was worth a search, and he had nothing in the world to do; so he lazily raised himself in his chair and tried to open the lower drawer of the *escritoir*.

"What a bore," murmured he, "that tiresome Emily has locked this up, and lost the key, I hav'nt a doubt."

This time he was unjust---not to observe that he was as angry at her locking, as her *not* locking up her drawers: he gave an ill-tempered pull at the upper drawer, it opened and there lay the key.

He was even now, although they were so

much happier than they had been, so thoroughly embued with the habit of finding fault with his wife, that do what she might, or leave undone what she might, her husband was certain to find something wrong ; nothing astonishes a young wife more, than to find that the person, who could not see one fault as a lover, discovers so many when he becomes a husband---it is a great surprise and not a very agreeable one; Mrs. Leigh had had her share, and much more than her share of this; and there sat her husband looking as cross, as man could, though sitting over the gold and silver, he had learnt to love so much and yet to spend so fast ; there he sat frowning away, because in one case she had locked a drawer, and in the other, she had not. What little things people can, and do, make themselves unhappy about? there are so many great sorrows in the world, real and unavoidable, coming too when we least expect them, that it is very wonderful, how people can fret and fume at trifles.

Luke Leigh was still out of humour, but he took up the key.

After knocking and sounding away, he unlocked one of the smaller drawers, but discovered nothing; he was just going to give up the search, when he perceived one still untried; at that, with new interest, he rapped and pressed, and with more success, for there too he found a secret drawer, small and most curiously concealed.

With infinite but silent delight, for he did not wish to be disturbed by little Mary, he drew out the drawer and searched for money.

"Well done, that's capital!" he thought. "five, twenty, thirty; all the lost notes?... No! one is still wanted; ha! it has slipped into this, I see the corner," and he took up a folded paper, opened it for the note which lay there, and then sat silent, motionless and thunderstruck.

It was the missing Will.

With trembling hands, he turned to the end.

“Signed, signed,” he murmured, “the witnesses?—all right; alive; the date? all there:” giving and bequeathing to Horace Leigh...all, that *he* called his own; all but the Leigh.

Weakened by illness, Luke shook and shivered as he sat.

What would become of him?...he had been so extravagant, for five long years, he had had his way with everything. He had been spending madly; his horses and his stables, were the wonder of the neighbourhood, his losses on the turf had been very large; Luke being always sure that he was right, had betted blindly, against all prudence, and the more he lost, the more he risked. At the last Ascot, he had lost—he did not like even to remember how large a sum it was. Obstinacy and ignorance combined had done so much for him on that and many similar occasions. The alterations too...in such bad taste...had cost such heavy sums! And then the endless hospitality on such an absurd scale; he had greatly in-

volved himself...so much as to induce him to deprive his poor, old, broken hearted mother of the income which had been left to his generosity to supply...so much so as to refuse his brother the assistance he had again and again *promised*.

With all, he had acquired the habit of indulgence—*and here was the will*. Depriving him of all he cared for...bringing him down to the embarrassed income of the Leigh, begging him by comparison, humiliating him to the very dust.

“To lose so much now that it had been his! then the arrears, that fearful paying up of long arrears!” and he looked wildly up... “nothing he looked upon was his!”

A moment, and a change came over him, this mental agony was hard to bear, he had not known one grief before.

A fierce temptation came upon him then. No living soul knew of the fatal will, this had been proved when Mrs. Vernon died; no soul knew of the will there in his hands. A blazing fire gleamed in his eyes close at

his hand ; he had but just to fling *it there* and all was his again. And there he sat, pale, and more ghastly pale, with every fearful thought. Never to selfish man was given a fiercer trial than this, to one who loved his gold, held on to gold, to whom it was more dear, more necessary than ever. To lose the wealth he had on one side ; to do but that no eye could see, no living soul could know ! he clutched the will ; the fire glared up as if to tempt him more.

“ Papa, papa ! ” shrieked Mary, “ what is the matter with you ? ... why do you look so strange, Papa ! ”

And flinging his arms round the terrified child, the father burst into a flood of tears.

Saved by his child ! He could not commit so great a crime, while she looked on. A flood of better, holier thoughts, came pouring, like a cooling stream, and quenched that wild temptation... Luke Leigh was saved. He rose a heart-struck, but a better man.

He felt he must write to Horace, that the will was found, at once. With shaking hand he took his watch...a moment past, before he could distinctly see the hour, so terrible had his emotion been ; it was so late, there scarce was time for post.

And then there came for one short second the thought, that he would wait, wait till to-morrow ; *but he dared not wait* ;...the horrible temptation was too fresh, and it might rise again !

He rang the bell with violence.

"Tell James to saddle a horse this moment, 'tis to save the post," he gasped, when the man-servant came.

He turned to write ; he could not write it there, where he so nearly sinned : he hurried down, with feverish earnestness, to write the letter, *while he could*. Time pressed, his hand was trembling and his lip was quivering fast, but still he wrote—

"Come to me, Horace, come at once, the will is found.

"LUKE LEIGH."

He had not power to pen another word, he sealed it; rang a furious peal, then could not wait to have it answered, so he ran rather than walked; he gave the letter to the groom with his own hand : he dared not trust himself ; he sent it *whilst he could*.

“ Poor missus !” said one of the grooms to the fellow-servant who was riding off with the letter...“ she’ll catch it when she comes home, for master’s in one of his tantrums... I never see him worse.”

Luke Leigh went into the drawing-room stooping and tottering ; he had all the appearance of having received a blow ; and mental shocks so severe as this have often a physical effect. He felt crushed ; great as had been his triumph on finding himself so unexpectedly heir-at-law—*so* great was his humiliation now ; still he had done right, and to make a sacrifice of self to principle was to Luke something so new, so very new, that after a time the idea became a comfort,

and then a pride. His brain, unused to thoughts of any weight, was overwrought in this strange struggle, and he leant back in his arm-chair, and shut his eyes, determined not to think more. Then stole upon him, making him cold as ice, the idea that he must tell his wife that they were ruined; for mortgaged as were now the old paternal farms at Leigh, there could be no dependence upon them; truly Luke Leigh was in a straight. Yes, he must tell his wife. Latterly, since they had been better friends, he actually had at times a feeling of tender consideration for her, especially since they stood together at the death-bed of their boy; and he dreaded the thought of her fair face after she should have heard the news.

What would become of them? he must trust to Horace!

What claim had he on Horace?

One by one came back upon his mind all the many acts of his own unkindness to his

brother. Luke Leigh had never once thought himself wrong till now ; and now, with his first worldly sorrow, seemed to come his first real knowledge of himself. Affliction has this power at times.

One by one, in sorrowful review, came the long list of kindnesses omitted, or unkindnesses done. From boy to boy, from man to man, if Horace measured out as it had been measured to him what would become of Luke ?

That he had done so little for his brother weighed heavily upon his conscience now, for it *came home to him*...nothing on earth could have touched the heart so cased in selfishness but that.

And he must be at his mercy ; he shuddered as he thought of the arrears...more than the income ; there were the savings of years of careful economy on Mrs. Vernon's part ; all saved and cherished up for Horace, but spent recklessly by Luke. Nearly all spent. It was a terrible position this to

stand in, and so suddenly : it was like falling down a precipice when standing in a full security.

Luke rang the bell for brandy, and drank a quantity, large for an abstemious man as he had of necessity become. He had been seized with such a nervous dread of his wife's return ; at every blast of the wind, which was raging in the old elms, and making strange sounds round the tall chimneys of the house, he thought he heard the wheels, and started up with that faint sickness in the heart, which surely all must feel when they have terrible news for those whose coming steps they are listening for.

He thought that Emily would be dreadfully overcome at this sudden change in their fates and fortunes ; and he determined not to tell her at once—to wait till the evening ; he would keep the servants in ignorance while he could ; he knew he was not beloved by his household, and he had even a vague idea that they would be pleased at his down-

fall, for he had been a severe and rough-speaking master.

It was very strange that all his faults crowded about him, like spectres upon this first day of grief. Oh, no...he could not bear that his servants should guess what had occurred ; he could not, would not bear their looks of wonder...or of pity! *pity* from menials whom he despised, as creatures of a different mould, when in reality, perhaps, not one of them but had a character superior to his own. He did not feel sure that he should not meet smiles of derision...he had caught such by chance during some of his quarrels with his wife in former days, and his blood boiled at the remembrance ; in short, he was working himself up into a violent indignation, as was his constant habit, at real or imaginary offence from others, till he almost forgot his actual position, when the sound of wheels close by awoke him to the stern reality with a shock as great as a sudden

plunge into cold water ; he started up, and went, fast as his gouty and still trembling limbs would carry him, into his dressing-room...told one of the servants to call him when dinner was upon the table, and violently locked himself into an asylum where he knew he was safe from intrusion ; he dared not face poor Emily as yet ; he thought he could better bear to meet her with the dinner table between them, and the attendants standing round...knowing as he did they were in fact *no longer his*. They were alone that day...that was a fortunate because a rare occurrence in the gay life they led ; they had not had a *tête-à-tête* for long, Emily and her husband, and what a conversation it would be when he could broach it !

Judging of others by himself, he had a vague idea that this would turn the scale of her affection, and turn it into hatred ; he felt if this had been in any way her doing he should have hated her.

But he judged wrong in judging Emily by himself; with all her faults she had a woman's heart, and that is more apt to cling to one in sorrow than to shrink from sharing it.

Suddenly he gave a violent start: it was the common household sound of the half hour dressing bell, but he put his hands to his ears...he could not bear the sound; weak in mind at all times, and weakened in body by long illness, Luke Leigh's nerves had given way; he heard next the door bell which announced Emily's return; he heard her light step come along the gallery, and past his dressing-room; she was humming a merry waltz.

The time had been when she would have stopped at his door a moment on her way, but he had so often answered her in a cross or surly manner that she never once thought of it—she had long given it up; he heard little Mary rush down the stairs, calling out, in her little joyous voice for “dear mamma,” and then all was still again.

And he had to sit there for half an hour, and think...of his own conduct to Horace ...when the will could not be found...in all the settlement of that business—and before that, when Horace gave up his birth-right—and since that...the applications he had refused—these were the things that tortured him the most; if Horace should revenge himself for all these separate, accumulated, acts of unkindness! Another man might have had some hope or trust, but Luke Leigh judged by himself, and that it was which gave his thoughts one half their sting; he knew how *he* should feel if he were Horace—he knew how *he* should act...even as he *had* acted; he knew that he and Emily were most ill-fitted by habit or by nature to cope with poverty, and he did not see what could avert that which would be poverty *to them*.

Poor Luke! whatever were his faults the punishment that had fallen on his head like a thunderbolt, was the one most calculated to touch him to the quick...it touched *himself*. He raised his head after a time, and

caught a glimpse of himself in the glass which almost terrified him, he looked so ghastly pale; his hair was in disorder, and his whole face bore traces of the mental conflict he had gone through; he was so wretched, he was tempted to descend to dinner as he was, but he felt the eyes of the servants would be upon him; they must see something was the matter; and Emily, poor girl, would ask...and he could not answer! he must dress! and with trembling hands, in all the anguish of his feelings, he dressed as usual, for they kept up great state, but it was hard to do. He turned to the glass again; he looked better certainly, but still he had not thought so short a time could have so changed the expression of his countenance. The dinner bell rang, and starting nervously again, he waited till he heard his wife kiss little Mary and go down...he waited till the servant had announced to him that dinner was served, and then, after swallowing a glass of cold water, he prepared to follow Emily, who had already

taken her seat. He felt as if he had committed a crime. On the day on which he had really resisted a temptation to do wrong did he first feel like a guilty man !

The beautiful old hall was lighted, and the table was served in splendid style...plate in abundance, liveried attendants, every dainty, every splendour that wealth could give was round him ; but of it all *nothing was his*...these words seemed to ring in his ears.

He walked painfully and slowly to his place ; he could not look at Emily ; yet there she was opposite to him, looking prettier even than usual, with her light, sunny curls dancing round her laughing face, and her fair shoulders displayed by her velvet dress.

She was not much astonished at his not speaking ; she just thought he was sulky, so she took her soup in silence ; but she was in such spirits she could not long respect his sullen mood.

“Oh, Luke, I had such a delightful

drive ; and I promised Lady Montague's pretty daughters we would have a ball here ; such rooms, they said," and she looked up ; her husband at that moment looked up too, for the first time, and their eyes met.

" Luke, Luke—you must be very ill !"

" The gout," he answered, with a smile.

CHAPTER XIII.

LUKE LEIGH poured out for himself glass after glass of wine ; once and again he tried to speak, and failed ; he dared not tell his wife ; he could not frame the words in which to give her such intelligence ; he must wait ; Horace could not be down at High Elms for some days ; she should be happy for at least so long.

Luke Leigh considerate ! great are the uses of adversity.

He looked at her with such a gaze of pity that she must have suspected something was wrong had she remarked it, but she was busily engaged in peeling walnuts and thinking of the ball she meant to give. After a time, during which she had been silent as she always was when Luke was out of temper, and she thought he was *so now*, she too looked up, startled again by his altered appearance, she said:

“ Luke, do have some advice—pray do have your prescription made up; let me find you the foot-stool; I’m sure you’re very ill; do let me send to-night?”

“ It *could* do me no good,” said Luke, in a mournful tone.

“ Oh, don’t get out of spirits, dearest Luke...it is not enough for that!” said the unconscious Emily.

“ You think so,” said Luke Leigh, with an actual shudder.

“ I *thought* not,” answered Emily; “ but if you shiver so I shall begin to fancy...”

“What?” said Luke, in a tone which startled her.

“That you are concealing from me...”

“What?” said Luke again.

“How ill you really are,” replied his wife, half frightened at his manner, and wondering at it still more, Emily said to herself—

“He has not been so cross to me since... since that dreadful day.”

For once in her life she did him an injustice.

“Are you not going into the drawing-room?” asked he; “I am so very unwell that I shall go to my own room.”

And he retired to his study...for he could not bear to see her, knowing what he had to tell.

When Horace came it would be time to break the terrible tidings to his unconscious wife.

To Mr. Browning Luke wrote a few short words; and sent them early the next morning by a groom.

The old lawyer opened the letter slowly, not to say reluctantly, from his extreme dislike to his rich client ; but when he read the note, all sense of common propriety deserted him at once ; his eyes opened wide with delight, his good-tempered face became so red that it looked quite dangerous. With one hand he grasped the letter at some little distance from his eyes, gazing at it as hard as if he would try to see it more than he did ! and with the other hand he pushed up from his head, in the intense excitement of his surprise, he pushed and pushed his wig, till it fell off. Quite unaware of this, he jumped hastily up, and still holding the letter up before him, he very nearly danced about the room, flew to the door, opened it wide, asked one of his astonished clerks to go directly to his house and say his pony must be brought instantly to him...there and then shutting the door walked about his room again in so strange a manner, that the clerks seeing their grave, and sober, and respected principal raving about without his

wig, were almost persuaded that he must be mad.

And so he was with joy ; Horace himself would not be so delighted at the recovered will as Mr. Browning...Horace might have divided and conflicting feelings, but the good lawyer had but one...delight.

If hours were taken to describe all that he felt it could not convey so clear an impression of his state of mind—to one who *knew both*—as the mere fact, that as Mr. Browning drove himself to High Elms...*the old pony galloped.*

Mr. Browning was speedily at High Elms, and his task was not an easy one...he had to conceal from Luke his own intense delight...at his misfortune ! They had a long and eager conversation, and upon hearing, from the now humbled Luke, the full extent of money spent, and money that he owed...the old and excellent lawyer was more rejoiced than ever...that by throwing all sorts of difficulties in the way, he had caused the money Luke had insisted upon having, to

be raised, not upon High Elms; but upon the Leigh property which was still his.

Another cause of real delight to the old man was this... Luke, the last time that they had met had given him directions not to mortgage, but actually to sell, no inconsiderable slice of Mrs. Vernon's compact and valuable estate; the papers completing the business were to have been signed that day.

The will it seems had been found just in time to save the estate from mutilation.

Coarse, selfish, and hard-natured as he was, Luke Leigh was to be pitied now; every feeling of which he was capable was quivering under this unexpected blow, the love of money, and the love of luxury; interest and pride all suffered, but above all he had no trust in Horace; for he *judged of others by himself*, and he sat there, after Mr. Browning left him, almost insensible, his idol had been shattered in his hands.

It would be idle to attempt to describe what Horace experienced as he read Luke's

short epistle...never were such grave events and changes put into fewer words.

His first thought was for Grace...his next for Luke and Emily.

Then, after a short time, Horace became greatly excited...he ordered horses to be ready in an hour; for railroads were then but just in their infancy, and then he sprang off with his old elastic step to Blanche.

"On such an occasion as this who could be my confidante but you;" said Horace to his astonished cousin, who had eagerly enquired if any one was ill, so strange was the expression of his face, "you comforted me in the old days, *do you remember them?* and now, Blanche...my sister...rejoice with me *...the will is found!*"

"*Found,*" said Blanche, in a low voice perfectly overcome by this sudden announcement, "found! Horace, and who found it?"

"Luke," replied he.

"Poor Luke!" said Blanche, "he will not bear this as *you* did, dear Horace."

“ Oh, Blanche,” replied her cousin, “ I would not own it to any human creature but yourself ; but what Luke made me suffer, the ungenerous triumph, the coarse, unfeeling hints, the money offered—and since then refused...and but the other day the cruel taunts—” and Horace turned away trying, as it were, to exclude the bitter thoughts.

“ Ah well,” said Blanche ; “ Luke has now met with his reward—he is punished enough.”

“ One thing makes me rejoice indeed,” continued she, after a pause. “ I can once more respect Aunt Vernon—I can now honour her memory—I never could forgive her.”

“ It restores one’s confidence in goodness,” answered Horace. “ I could not understand——”

“ Nor I,” said Blanche, “ there seemed to me but one possible supposition ; I kept it sacredly in my own heart—but I *suspected Luke* ! I preferred thinking so ill of him, to fancying that christian woman, Mrs. Ver-

non, could have deceived us all—I *suspected Luke*...but I see it is possible to do *even him an injustice.*”

She had not been so very far from right, in her suspicions, that clear-sighted Blanche, for Luke *had all but* yielded to the temptation !

But for his 'child's terrified screams he *would* have destroyed the will.

During the time, which elapsed between his finding the will and the expected arrival of his brother, Luke hardly spoke to his wife—he heard her singing—and he sighed—he heard her playing with little Mary...and he fairly groaned ; talking the matter over with the lawyer had opened his eyes to a thousand things he had not thought of before ; what an account he had to render, and what mercy had he a *right* to expect from Horace.

He must tell his brother *all*, surely it was better to do so himself than to allow it to be done by another...he might so perhaps hope that Horace, who was so good and kind, would for his sake, as he was his

brother, would do something...but...*what had he done for Horace?* What an opportunity was this for him...he might *revenge himself!*

And it was from such a reverie as this that he was roused by the sound of wheels, Horace was come sooner than he expected; there was something in that of mercy, the time of his suspense was shortened.

Emily, was anxiously looking out for him, he was coming she knew; but why, she did not know; she went out gaily and eagerly to meet him, and putting her arm confidently through his, took him a prisoner into the drawing-room.

"And Luke?" asked Horace, rather bewildered at her manner.

"Never mind him," said Emily; "he will be here directly, I don't know what's the matter with him, he doesn't tell *me!* but ever since the day before yesterday he has been in such bad humour...he hasn't said a word to me!"

And Horace saw that he had *not*, and a

pang of sorrow, and as it were remorse for being the innocent cause of a coming grief to her, made itself felt ; he was grieved for her, as she had been for him.

Luke heard him come and covered his face with his hands alone in his own room, he seemed sinking into a weak despair; but suddenly he remembered—and he roused himself, he stood upright...felt as a man again, for he remembered...he had been tried and had not fallen...he had been sorely tempted and he had conquered the temptation ; *with that thought* he could face Horace.

The meeting of the brothers ! under these strangely altered circumstance was for a moment deeply embarrassing to both.

They grasped one anothers hands...that of Horace was a friendly pressure—scarcely returned by Luke.

“ Come out...on the lawn,” said the latter, in a strange, low voice.

And they stepped out of the open window

and went quickly towards the shelter of the old Elms.

"This is all yours," said Luke with a kind of gasp.

"The will is then the one that she was known to make."

"Yes," replied Luke.

And Horace felt a weight raised from his heart.

"All yours," repeated Luke.

With what great care did Horace banish from his countenance and manner the slightest vestige of the triumph...which, under circumstances so similar, Luke had made so conspicuous.

"You have the Leigh...and...and *my* younger brother's share," said Horace doubting whether he ought to allude to that last circumstance, but still feeling the words had comfort in them.

That younger brother's share, which Luke had never offered to return to him in any shape, when he was left so nearly penniless!

"You must...be aware," said Luke in short, broken gasps as it were, "that Aunt Vernon, (and he breathed low to himself an oath at the name), left a large...sum of savings—*all yours.*"

Horace did not know the exact amount.

"Those savings had...accumulated to... thirty thousand pounds," said Luke.

And Horace started violently.

"In the space of years," said Luke, with a despairing accent..."they came to that."

And grasping the arm of Horace to save himself from falling, he said whilst *he could*.

"The whole—is gone."

Horace Leigh did not answer, he was in no way prepared for this.

"And Horace," said his brother, who was now most truly wretched, "for five years, I have taken the rents...seven thousand a year and—*they were yours.*"

"I know it," answered Horace, and there was a coldness in his manner which astonished and terrified his brother.

"I am embarrassed," said Luke with a

trembling voice, "with all—I am embarrassed! I was about to sell the eastern side of the estate...I was by Heaven. I found the will...but just in time."

There was a very painful pause; one of sheer despair to Luke; for Horace...Horace Leigh! he had not expected from you this cold, silent, awful attention.

"And the Leigh?" enquired Horace in a revolting, business like manner.

"Is mortgaged...the best farms are mortgaged," answered Luke, "that fellow Browning made such confounded difficulties that I found it easier to raise money on the Leigh...luckily for you," said Luke savagely.

"Ha!" answered Horace Leigh.

Ah! Horace, Horace, is your nature changed already, that you can see your brother in such dire distress, and speak no word of comfort.

Let Luke's own conscience answer, and give the reason, why Horace says not one kind word, but walks in such deep, frowning, thought.

Can there be circumstances which cause even such a one as Horace, to feel the sweetness of Revenge ?

It may be so.

There was another pause excruciatingly painful to the humbled Luke.

“ It was not my fault ; I believed myself master here,” said Luke.

“ There was no fault in *that*,” replied his brother with some emphasis.

“ I did not know the money I was *squandering*,” said Luke suddenly aware of the real nature of his extravagance, “ *was yours !*”

And Horace was still silent.

“ You have a right to demand it all back ;” said Luke with a great effort.

The answer Horace made was this.

“ I have.”

“ And you will...try to take your right ?” asked Luke.

“ I will tell you—answer you—to-morrow,” was the cold reply of the new master of that fair domain.

Luke was aghast; he had not expected this; he had hoped for—he knew not what; he wanted Horace to be generous to him, who had still a fine estate! And how had he treated Horace when he had all, and Horace—nothing.

How differently we think and feel, for ourselves and others.

“It is late, scarcely time for me to go over to Mr. Browning’s,” said Horace as the half hour dinner bell reached their ears with its familiar sound; yet I must see him.”

“I have asked him to dinner on purpose, you can speak to him here in my study,” said Luke in his altered voice, “he can assure you that it is all right *for you*—the will I mean.”

“I will walk on, and meet him, he can drive me back,” said Horace quite unable to bear more *tête-à-têtes* with Luke or Emily, till he had made up his mind what he should do.

Luke had dreaded the evening too, and therefore he had asked the lawyer to join

them, he being the only person, who as yet knew of the change.

No matter, it would be known and talked about enough, in a few days.

Horace met Mr. Browning on the road, nearly as much excited as himself, and seating himself beside him in the little pony gig he was soon satisfied of the complete validity of the long missing will, and of the truth of all that Luke had told him.

“If I might advise,” said Mr. Browning, “the kindest and most considerate way in which you could act—that would be what you would wish of course?” continued he with a bow.

“Decidedly,” said Horace.

“Would be just this,” said Mr. Browning.

“The Leigh is worth, I understand, three thousand a year—a thousand out of that ought to be put aside to pay the interest, and by degrees the principal of the heavy mortgages, for there are two. By great good luck and management I hope High Elms is clear. A thousand, yes for that, and Mr.

Horace—say a thousand per annum more to pay you by slow, but sure degrees, your arrears of rent and savings, provision, for your family, sir, excuse me,” and the little lawyer laughed, “no right to throw away their chance, though they are just yet—only---in prospect, sir; a thousand a year for you out of the Leigh till you are paid in full, or if you like to remit part, would be the very *kindest* and best way of settling *your* affairs with your brother, and that would leave them just a thousand for themselves, I wish *I* had it, certain---a fine income,” said the little lawyer thoughtfully, “you couldn’t do it in a kinder way.”

“Will you have the goodness to tell my brother this as your deliberate opinion and advice?...I will take care you shall have the opportunity,” said Horace.

Who could have believed all this of him! the poor are so often more generous than the rich.

What a dinner table was that...how strange a contrast to the day when Luke

first took the head of the table as his right—he had it now by courtesy to Emily!

There was no triumph in the manner of the Heir come to his own at last—never had Emily, who was gay and happy in seeing him...never had she seen him wear a look of such deep thought.

The moment after she had left the dining-room, Horace had left it too.

It was a long walk, and he took the horse which he always kept down in the village and he rode on with such a tender, anxious, look on his expressive face.

Where could he be going so late.

There is no trial greater to a beauty, much less to a spoiled and petted beauty, than to believe a man to be attached to her, and find herself to have been wrong...to expect him to propose, and find he leaves her.

Yet such had been the fate of the proud and beautiful Grace Forrester.

Horace Leigh had told her, he could not ask her to be his wife...such had been what

she supposed to be, the meaning of the few, incoherent words he had uttered before he left her so abruptly, such had been their last meeting.

During his illness, she had heard much and often, from her brother Stephen, how he was going on—and what she felt when he rushed into the room, that one sad day, and told her there was “no hope”—can never be known. She buried her anguish in the depths of her heart, wrung both by love and pride, and felt no comfort, but in prayer.

Since his recovery they had not met, but she had by no means recovered from the shock, for he had fallen in her esteem.

“He had tried to the uttermost to win her love, without intending to return it.”

Such was the very thought passing through her mind, as a gentleman on horseback, doubtless some friend of Stephen's, rode up to the gate...leaving his horse with the

servant, he would not be announced...but walked round to the window...as usual.

Grace was sitting very quietly reading in a large arm-chair, with its back to the window, and she heard no step, till a shadow fell on her book, and turning round—she saw Horace Leigh!

She rose in great but suppressed agitation, trembling with emotion.

He took her hand, and his own shook too ; astonished at his silence, she looked up in his face, and the expression that she met, of tender love and new born happiness, beyond measure surprised her.

She disengaged her hand, and seated herself again in the large arm-chair...and he took a low chair and brought it close to hers and said in a gentle voice,

“ At last—at last, Grace, I may, it is no longer dishonorable, to tell you how I love you ; how I worship you. I can only entreat, implore, for some slight hope. Grace Forrester ! When we last parted, I dared not, but you know...you knew then, how

dear, how inexpressibly dear you were to me: it is too much to ask at once, but will you try, in time, to love me."

Grace, startled and astonished, felt the humility of this, and smiled such a faint, shadow of a quivering smile. But it was enough, more than enough.

"I cannot measure my words; I am too full of happiness," said Horace, "you will not forbid all hope—you do not despise me."

Such a sweet blushing smile again lighted her beautiful face.

"You would be mine, poor and dependent on my own exertions?"

"I would," said Grace, speaking for the first time, "I honor you for them."

"Dependent as I was," said Horace, "but now—the Will is found! and I can ask you to be mistress of High Elms..."

"Poor Emily," was the first thought of Grace.

"Luke has done me much wrong, and much unkindness, but it shall not recoil on *her*," said Horace.

We will not intrude on the first hours of such happiness as theirs. Horace had been severely tried, but he was happy now, at last.

When Stephen returned, he found that though he gained a brother, he must lose Grace.

With a promise to be there as early upon the following morning as his affairs with Luke would possibly allow, Horace rode back to High Elms, musing as he rode.

He walked through the finely proportioned hall (which had not been altered to Luke's *taste*) with a new feeling, he looked round upon all the beauties and comforts of the place, he took a new and deeper interest in them, not that they were at that moment his, but because they would be—hers.

He had purposely made it late, that there might be no time for conversation; he wished to have time, in the silence of the night, to think over how little or how much he ought to do; his resolutions and inten

tions formed on the way down had been made before he knew or guessed the extent of Luke's embarrassments, or the amount of all the savings of the careful old lady ; he had expected there would have been at least something left...he had not been prepared for all the communications Luke had that day made...he must alter his course of intended action, he must think...and so, perceiving Emily was still ignorant of the sword suspended over her head, he said, quietly,

" Luke, you had better tell her to-night, and I will speak to you both to-morrow ; you have heard Browning's advice to me ?"

" Yes," said Luke Leigh, turning a livid white..." and I suppose it is the best."

" I will tell you what *I* think to-morrow," replied his brother, and he left the drawing-room for his own chamber.

What a task for Luke ! Yet he must tell her now, or the shock would come too heavily upon the morrow.

He gazed upon her with such a kind, and tender, pitying gaze...he felt as if he were

about to lose her love, judging her by himself!

She was surprised—delighted, and answered him with such looks and smiles that they unmanned him quite.

Nevertheless he seated himself upon the sofa, and called her to him : he leant back rather, that he might not see her face as she sat there by his side ; it was the first time in his life that he had felt for another more than for himself.

“ My darling Emily ! my poor, dear girl ! ” said Luke.

And she, astonished at his gentle, mournful tone, looked back and laughed.

“ Oh, I’m a most unlucky creature...now that you are so kind.”

“ Unlucky ! we have been so indeed, more than you dream of Emily.”

“ Is Mary ill ? ” said the young mother, springing up.

But Luke’s arm quietly drew her into her seat again.

“ Mary is well...quite well ; but you

must prepare yourself, dearest, for a sad—a terrible misfortune.”

“Are *you* ill, Luke?” asked Emily.

“No,” replied Luke.

“Then no misfortune can come near whilst you are what you have lately been,” said Emily.

“What if we were to become suddenly poor?”

“Have...we spent so much?” asked Emily...*you* she had almost said, but stopped herself in time, although she knew her share of the extravagance had not been great.

“What if the Will were found?”

“Is it?” eagerly asked Emily...“is it really discovered, Luke?”

“I found it,” answered he, covering his face with his hands, at the remembrance of that hour of fiery trial.

But Emily sprang up and clasped her hands.

“Oh, I am so delighted for dear Horace.”

“And what is to become of *us*?” said Luke.

“Oh, I forgot ourselves just at the mo-

ment, answered Emily ; “ we must just go back to the old Leigh !”

“ But you are not aware...I can have but one third of the small income of the Leigh.”

Emily looked at him.

“ I owe to Horace...all the thousands a year we have been spending here, and more !” said Luke, passionately grinding his teeth together. “ I must pay him, and other debts...we shall be in poverty, Emily...absolute poverty !”

“ But we can still be happy, Luke, if you...I mean *I* shall be happy if you are but kind. I will manage...I will be a careful wife; your mother, Luke, will help us to manage.” After a pause...“ We shall be happy, Luke,” continued Emily, “ if it is only to Horace that you owe these awful sums ; I know him well...he will not ask...he would not take them Luke.”

And he, shaken by his great grief, replied...

“ You do not understand, my darling

wife...the Leigh is but a shadow now to what it was, and *this*---is lost."

"No matter Luke...Horace will be rich, Horace will help us."

Then Luke raised his lowering brow from his clasped hands and said...tremblingly said,

"*Did I help him?*"

Emily was at last melted to tears by this; how she had entreated Luke to do so; how she had grieved that he did not.

And now *he* thought it would recoil on his own head, but *she* thought otherwise.

She very nearly brought her own entreaties to the remembrance of Luke, but this was not a moment in which to show she had been right while he was wrong, he was suffering too much already...so returning to her own fixed opinion of the fine character of Horace, she repeated, in the certainty of her own mind, "Horace will help us... Horace will not stand upon his right."

"But Emily," said Luke in all the helpless despair of one, who had nothing within him-

self that could lead him to think well of others! "I do assure you he never said one word, he never gave one look that could for an instant lead me to a hope—not one. We shall be poor...a thousand a year to me! and the worst of all Emily, the bitterest pang is this—I must part with my horses."

And they sat up to a late hour there, and by degrees Luke had explained to Emily how very serious was the posture of affairs, how very little he had a right to hope from Horace; he poured into her listening ear all his remorse at his past conduct; repentance came, now when it was too late, now when his faults might fall back on his own head.

And he was so wretchedly, so weakly miserable that he infected her with his own hopeless fears, and she became as wretched as himself; but through it all, with her woman's heart she tried to comfort *him*; she tried to soften the prospects of the future; she clung to him in his humbled state with far more affection than she had ever showed or felt before, and weeping as she was she

still repeated, though she had almost lost her own belief in it.

“ Horace will do more than you expect.”

And again for the hundredth time Luke’s shuddering answer came.

“ What did I do for him ?”

CHAPTER XIV.

HORACE sat up in his own room, leaning his elbow on the table, thinking of the past. The thousand and ten thousand things that Luke had done or left undone: it was a long and accumulated list of aggravations; he would think them over once more.

Was it to act upon them now? or was it to forget them after that once---for ever.

The only question rising in his mind was this; had he a right to do what he intended, was it a just thing to do?

And it took him long, very long, hours to answer that to his own mind, at last he did, and then retiring to rest, he slept calmly and peaceably—with a conscience fully at ease, slept although—what a day it had been to him!

And they all came to breakfast in the morning at the accustomed hour, and the table was laid in all its morning freshness, and the old Elms were waving in the breeze, visible through the open windows, and Horace entered the room.

Everything he looked on was his own.

And Luke came in with his face deadly pale and his sullen brows heavier than ever, heavy with real grief, and yet, when he met Horace face to face, he held his own head more proudly than he had ever done; for he remembered he might have prevented all this grief of his, prevented all this by a crime, and—did not.

And Emily came in, and weary and worried, shocked and frightened as she was by all that Luke had said, her deep affection for her

brother conquered it all, and she pressed his hand in both of hers, and looked up in his face with eyes laden with tears, but with her sunniest smile.

"I cannot *but be glad...for you,*" was all she said, but Horace saw how sincere she was, and stooping down he kissed her forehead.

He was most deeply touched.

What a breakfast that was...a mere mockery; Emily's hand shook as she went through her duties as mistress of the mansion, which she knew she could never be again, but as she looked now and then at Horace her confidence revived...there was not a shade of triumph in his face, but he looked happy.

She knew he would not look so, unless he had some pleasant words in store for them.

Luke never once looked up...his conscience was awake—and weighed him down to dust.

When even the pretence of breakfasting was over, and they sat there in silence,

Horace Leigh turned to Emily, and said—gravely, in consideration for her feelings,

“ My dearest *sister* !” and he laid such a stress on the kind word, in the sweetest tones of his rich and expressive voice, and gave her such a look of kind and brotherly assurance, “ Luke has told you I think, of the great change that has come on us both.”

“ Yes !” answered she.

“ I wish, before you, dearest, to say, what my intentions are ; Luke owes me, Emily, the rents for five long years...thirty-five thousand pounds.”

Emily turned deadly pale at this, and Luke rose, involuntarily started up, as if he had heard it for the first time.

“ Emily, my only sister,” continued Horace, leaning forward close to her, fixing his eyes upon her---meeting her tearful gaze, “ that money made you happy---it was spent on you---*Will you accept it as a gift from me ?*”

Emily burst into tears---Luke wrung his hand.

“ This kind, this delicate, this---” Luke Leigh could say no more, he covered his face with his hands---the contrast was too great.

Emily at last looked in her brother’s face, and seizing his hand, carried it to her lips.

“ It is *like you*,” was all she said---her only thanks.

Horace Leigh waited till the emotion, caused by his generous gift, had ceased, and then he said :

“ Luke, there is business yet to settle---the savings of my aunt Vernon !”

Luke groaned aloud.

“ I am about to marry, Luke ; you, dearest Emily, will be the mistress here... until Grace Forrester becomes---my wife. I do not think it just or right to her, to give up all that is my due...Thirty-thousand pounds is a large sum to lose.”

There was a pause.

"But you will find it difficult to clear the Leigh---You may forget my claims for five years, Luke, by that time you may do well, and then I shall put in my claim---Twenty-thousand of that sum, Luke, I freely give to you---the rest, ten-thousand, you will pay me---in as many years.---He will not find it hard, dear Emily, it will but teach him prudence."

"Your loss is great," sobbed Emily.

"It was no fault of his, he thought it was his own," said Horace Leigh.

Luke did not thank him, he did not say a word, he sat there paralyzed, as it were, gazing at Horace in the extremity of his surprise, and when he spoke at last it was no word of thanks—he muttered to himself—

"Impossible!"

He could not believe in such generous thoughts as these.

But Emily took the hand of her brother once more, pressed her lips to it again, laid her burning forehead on it for an instant,

and then looking in his face, said with her cheeks flushed with a crimson glow :

“ I---*I am not surprised.*”

And Horace felt no words could have conveyed so keen a compliment as those.

Tearful, and trembling with emotion, after a pause she said to him :

“ May God make you as happy, Horace, as you have this day made me.”

And then Luke would have arisen and thanked him ; but he could not ; he tried to speak, but his emotion was too great ; but with a strong effort, at last he said :

“ Horace, *forgive me.*”

And the younger brother walked up to Luke---he laid one hand upon his shoulder and looked down, a Christian man's forgiveness in his smile---he grasped his hand---he kissed Emily's shining hair, and left them.

He galloped madly on his way to Grace ---he had past through many a grief and trial ; but never was any human creature

happier in this world of ours than Horace Leigh.

And he told Grace :

“ What will you say to me, *my own*,” said he in his low, passionate tone, “ I have given away much that is yours as well as mine...I had no right to do so, dearest, had I *now*, without your leave.”

And he gazed fondly on those glorious eyes of hers, half laughing and half shy.

“ I had no right at all...you must be angry Grace; it was not *mine to give* ! what do you say to me ?”

“ Say ?” answered she blushing at his making such common cause with her, already. “ I say,” and strangely enough her words were those of Emily.

“ It was...just like you.”

“ A cutting speech,” said Horace, with a pretended gravity, “ you mean foolish and wrong.”

“ Think what you please,” said Grace with great demureness.

And then after sitting there very gravely

for a moment Grace glanced up with those magnificent brown eyes of hers full of such joyousness ; and they met his gazing so fondly, yet so merrily on hers...and then they laughed.

They were kindred spirits, Horace Leigh and Grace, and in their inmost hearts they felt it thankfully.

The first person, not of the family who heard the news, heard it from the lips of Horace, whom she had never ceased to call her dear young master, was Mrs. Stock.

How she did cry ! and then, like good Mr. Browning, she lost every sense of her usually great propriety, and how she laughed, and how she did behave ! It was to her a source of greater triumph even than the recovery of the lost money...“ Of that,” she said drawing herself up. “ *Of that* the other *servants* might be glad ; it didn’t signify to her, no one *could* have suspected her and her dear Stock ! excepting Mr. Luke, and she had paid him out well, by suspecting him !”

The next person, he could not exactly be called the next *indifferent* person, for *he* never was so happy in his life, who heard the glorious news, that Mr. Horace had come in to all his fortune...was James Williams. I am sorry to say, though a very excellent young man and very steady, he was silly enough to kiss the letter—*who* he took it for, it is impossible to guess, but the moment he could get away, he took an omnibus, unlucky as they were to those connected with the family, and went off to Mr. Spildin's.

They happened to be all sitting at tea, precisely as they were the evening they first were introduced to the reader (if there be one), and the rushing in of James Williams, in a great state of excitement, made quite a sensation. There sat Mr. Spildin with his feet tucked up on his chair as usual ; there sat Mrs. Spildin a little the worse for wear during the four or five years that had elapsed ; there sat the clever and tiresome Tom, greatly improved in every way ; and in the corner John, without his cat—the cat was dead and gone.

It is painful to own, but the truth at times must be spoken that the very first thing James did when he rushed violently into the room---was to kiss Sophy.

"Oh, James, for shame!" said she.

"Such news, such *News*!" said James.
"The will is found."

"Then, then—I—I," stammered Sophy, and she burst into tears.

"The *Money too*," said James triumphantly, "the money and the will in a secret drawer together; Mr. Horace wrote to me to tell you this!"

He had thought of poor Sophy's feelings already, in the midst of all his own.

"*And*," whispered James, "we can be married Sophy!"

"To think of my keeping dear Mr. Horace out of his own for five long years," said Sophy sobbing still.

"Oh, but it's all right now," answered James.

"All's well that ends well," interposed Tom with dignity—greatly offended with James and Sophy.

And he became more and more cross, when they went out for a walk together; so when they came in again he walked up to Sophy, looked at her in a very melo-dramatic way, and said in her ear in a very effective whisper, which he had heard at the Surrey Theatre,

“I give you up.”

“High time you should sir,” said his father laughing heartily at this bravado.

“And when will you be married?” asked Mrs. Spildin in a low voice.

“This day three weeks;” answered poor Sophy blushing, “*so James Williams says.*”

It is an absurd observation, but like all old sayings often proves true, that if there is one wedding there are certain to be three.

And three there were.

Horace and Grace had no sooner announced their engagement to Stephen, he had no sooner heard and congratulated them upon their happy prospects than he set off for town.

Lady Walgrave did not take half the time, or waste half so many arguments in per-

suading Louisa to accept Mr. Forrester, as she had been obliged to do before she would promise "that horrid Mr. Green," to be his wife.

In short, and also in confidence, she had no difficulty whatsoever! it was rather peculiar that though Horace himself did not marry a Walgrave, they became the wives of his two friends.

"My dear," said Sir Josiah Walgrave to his wife, "what on earth am I to do without either of my girls; you were always wanting them to be married, but you will most certainly be sorry for it when they are."

"Louisa's is such a good match, I cannot grieve about that—certainly poor, dear Isabelle might have done better if..."

"If she had been left to herself," mildly suggested Sir Josiah, looking rather ill-naturedly as well as significantly at his wife.

"If she had waited," continued the regretting lady mother, "Mr. Horace Leigh..."

"Is only just become worth having," sarcastically added her husband.

"I'm sure I wish *she* hadn't married!" sighed Lady Walgrave.

"My dear love!" said Sir Josiah, "whose fault was it?" and he looked at her as if this would be quite unanswerable.

But Lady Walgrave never was without an answer—never had been in her life, except in the matter of The Green: and her reply was this...

"If there was a fault the fault was yours; you told me it was better for their own sakes they should marry if they could."

"I did so," said the conscience-stricken father; "and we threw away my pretty Isabelle upon a man who really is a simpleton."

"She's very happy though," said Lady Walgrave.

"It was my fault; why did we plot and plan?" repeated Sir Josiah; "he can't take care of her...my pretty Isabelle!" and he thought quietly for a moment before he spoke again.

"My dear, I don't know what would

become of me without my girls ; I cannot spare them both ;...you and I...dear me, how very dull ! Suppose we ask young Keane and my pet, Isabelle, to live with us ? ah, that is famous," and he rubbed his hands joyfully ; " as soon as Lou. is married they shall come and make us merry. I cannot be happy without one of my children."

And it was so settled. Fred made no sort of difficulty, and Isabelle was nothing more or less than perfectly enchanted, for she told Louisa in confidence that the great trial of married life was " Bills."

The next arrangement made was, that Grace and Horace, Stephen Forrester and Louisa Walgrave, should be married on the same day in Town.

Grace had no mother, no relation even who could stand in that light to her ; but Blanche asked her to her magnificent Town house ; Blanche gave her all the kind assistance that her warm heart could suggest ...Blanche more than any one rejoiced in

her happiness, and herself conducted Grace to the altar, where she was to meet Horace Leigh.

After all the cheques and changes of his life, they had ended thus.

Stephen took home a wife, who never was too much for him, as Grace had often been.

Sophy and James Williams were well provided for, in a place of trust, by Horace, and lived in Aunt Stock's house near High Elms; it was one of the proudest moments in that faithful creature's life when she drank the health of her young master, with some of his wedding cake...the proudest except one...the day on which she was installed with honour as housekeeper at High Elms.

Luke and Emily were, after all, happy at the Leigh, for she was less giddy, and his temper was...no worse.

And Tom? his whole career was queer and quaint; but it would be too long a story now...his life is but commenced.

"Blanche," observed Mr. Willoughby

Green to his elegant and placid wife, "my dear Blanche, I saw a good deal of Grace and her husband, and they are both possessed of such keen wits that if they once begin to disagree!—

"They never will begin," said Blanche, with a happy smile.

What would have happened---what bitter words might have been said, may be imagined ; but Blanche was right. Both were, it may be, so afraid of what the other *might* and *could* say, they never did begin.

Horace Leigh had suffered enough---he never again gave way to the Family Failing of the Leighs.







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